

UNIVERSITY OF LISBON
COLLEGE OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



**Male homosexuality in Islamic
normative and in the mujun literature of
al-Andalus and the Maghreb between the
10th and 13th centuries**

MIGUEL ANTÓNIO DE FREITAS BORONHA

DISSERTATION

MASTER'S DEGREE IN HISTORY OF THE MEDIEVAL AND ISLAMIC
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DISSERTATION ORIENTED BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HERMENEGILDO NUNO
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مداد حبر العالم أفضل من دم الشهيد

“The ink of the scholar is more precious than the blood of martyrs.”

Index

I. Acknowledgements	I
II. Abstract	II
III. Resumo	III
1. Introduction	1
2. Concepts	7
2.1. Homosexuality	7
2.2. Medieval Islam	9
2.3. Effeminate	9
2.4. Sexual roles (Passive/Active)	10
2.5. Pederasty	11
2.6. Archetype	12
2.7. Literature	13
3. State of the Art	16
4. Sexual normative in the Qur'an and Hadiths	34
5. Archetypes and symbols for male homosexuality	49
5.1. The boy, or "the gazelle"	49
5.2. The beardless / hairless	61

5.3. The cupbearer / servant / slave	66
5.4. The pagan / ignorant of the Qur'an	70
5.5. The prostitute	73
5.6. The moon	80
5.7. The old man	83
5.8. The poet / secretary	88
5.9. The damaged one	91
5.10. The animal	95
5.12. The foreigner	100
6. Beyond the archetypes	105
6.1. The body and personal hygiene	105
6.2. Signs that may identify a homosexual man	109
6.3. Homosexuality explained through Galen's humor theory.....	115
7. Conclusion	121
8. Bibliography	124
8.1. Sources	124
8.2. Studies	126

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II. Abstract

The understanding of human sexuality is fundamental to the understanding of the society and culture that shapes individuals. It is a result of those external factors, but also can be traced to their genesis.

Islam's stance on homosexuality is well defined in its jurisprudence, not the least in the Qur'an. Sodomy is forbidden, and its punishment varies according to the hadiths acknowledged by each different school of jurisprudence. However, despite this prohibition, we see a flourishing of homoerotic poetry in al-Andalus and the Maghreb between the 10th and 13th centuries, particularly in the genre known as *mujun*, or obscene.

This thesis studies this paradoxical ambivalence in Medieval Islam, where a highly prohibitive religion in regards to same-sex relations, but sexually permissive, sees the coexistence of constraining normative and obscene representation. Relying on fundamental works of mujun literature as our sources – Ibn Sara as-Santarini, Ahmad al-Tifashi and Ibn Hazm – we highlight the sexual permissiveness expressed through Arabic and in both treatises and poetry, to better understand how the third Abrahamic religion permitted such phenomenon at the very height of what many consider it to be its Golden Age.

KEYWORDS: “Islam”, “Homosexuality”, “Literature”, “Mujun”, “Al-Andalus”, “Maghreb”

III. Resumo

A compreensão da sexualidade humana é fundamental para que se compreenda a sociedade e a cultura responsável por moldar o indivíduo. Resulta desses mesmos factores externos, mas também pode ser traçada até à génese dos mesmos.

A postura do Islão em relação à homossexualidade encontra-se bem definida na sua jurisprudência, nomeadamente no Corão. A sodomia é proibida, e a punição pela sua prática varia de acordo com os hadiths reconhecidos por cada uma das diferentes escolas de jurisprudência. No entanto, apesar da proibição, observamos um florescer de poesia homoerótica no al-Andalus e no Magrebe dos séculos X ao XIII, particularmente no género literário denominado de *mujun*, ou obsceno.

Esta tese propõe-se a estudar esta ambivalência paradoxal no Islão Medieval, em que uma religião altamente proibitiva em relação à homossexualidade, mas sexualmente permissiva, testemunha a coexistência de uma normativa constritiva com a representação obscena. Recorrendo a trabalhos fundamentais da literatura mujun enquanto fontes – Ibn Sara as-Santarini, Ahmad al-Tifashi e Ibn Hazm – relevamos a permissividade sexual expressa em Árabe tanto em tratados como em poesia, para melhor compreender como é que a terceira religião Abraâmica permitiu tal fenómeno na altura que muitos consideram como a sua Idade de Ouro.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: “Islão”, “Homossexualidade”, “Literatura”, “Mujun”, “Al-Andalus”, “Maghreb”

1. Introduction

Islam has become one of the most prominent discussions in Western media in recent times, particularly since the ill-fated 9/11 of 2001. The consequences of this turning point in history have been varied, extensive and far-reaching, causing a dramatic change in the geo-political perception of the world – perhaps the greatest change since the fall of the Soviet Union.¹

From the second American-Iraqi War, to the fundamental impact of social media that resulted in the Arab Spring; from the fall of Mubarak in Egypt and the neighboring Libyan regime, to the on-going Syrian Civil War. From the continued conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, to the recent advent of the most recent political and military power in the Middle East: the Islamic Caliphate of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). These major historical events, alongside many others, have ensured the familiarity of Western households with this clash of civilizations², where the mere concept of Islam has increasingly become linked with an apparent menace. But what is, effectively, Islam? Could its fifteen hundred years of existence be diluted into the actions of extremists? And what has the third Abrahamic religion faced during its course that may help us better understand the current problems it faces?

Each of these questions would require a very extensive and in-depth study of its own to be even able to approach some form of sensible and coherent answer. But this thesis certainly falls into the umbrella of that last question. The history of Islam is still riddled with gaping holes of obscurity, being the history of al-Andalus and the

¹ HARRISON, Lawrence E. and HUNTINGTON, Samuel P. [eds.], 2001, p. 74;

² KEPEL, Giles, 2003, pp. 21-24;

neighboring Maghreb no exception. By the very nature of its lack of sources, the Medieval period is still subject to much speculation, particularly in regards to issues that have only come to light in recent decades, such as human sexuality. While political and economical aspects of al-Andalus are now considerably well known to current historians, there is a remarkable lack of studies in the area of social history. This mysteriousness certainly endows al-Andalus with a sense of charm and nostalgia that lives to this day.

It is this confluence of a rising interest in Islam with another matter which has become one of the central questions of the 21st century in regards to Human Rights: the matter of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) equality³. LGBT rights have inflamed debates in the African continent, marked one of the main lines of diplomatic action of the current US administration, and have been used as a standard by political parties all over the West, from those in favor to those widely opposed.

What, then, is the relationship between Islam and homosexuality? The fact that no country of Muslim majority accepts the equal treatment of LGBT individuals under the law epitomizes the current state of affairs. Although attitudes change from country to country, it remains that Islamic Orthodoxy condemns homosexual conduct.

Thus we come to one of the central tenants of the present thesis: to study the relationship between Islam and homosexuality, in the Medieval period, to find out if we can understand more of the present issues.

Firstly, it should be noted that this thesis focuses on male homosexuality only. This is due to a series of factors, namely the need to restrict the subject of our analysis to comprise the appropriate scope of the study we are hoping to conduct. Also, male

³ CROMPTON, Louis, 2009, p. 65;

and female homosexuality raise entirely separate questions of their own, making it very hard to conceive a model able to comprise both problems. Female homosexuality is also much more lacking in sources, namely due to the lack of acknowledgment of its existence throughout most of the history of Islam.⁴

Secondly, our study is divisible into three distinct parts. Our first concern will be to extensively analyze the main corpus of Islamic jurisprudence, comprised by the Qur'an and the hadiths attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, highlighting passages that impact legislations and normative in regards to male homosexuality. While the entire Qur'an is subject to this analysis, only the hadiths considered valid and used by the Maliki school of jurisprudence will be studied, as these are the ones that influenced the shaping and execution of the law in Medieval al-Andalus and the Maghreb. Any other school of jurisprudence will only be considered for the sake of allowing room for comparison and result in better comprehension of its specificities.

Following Islamic normative is the study of representations of male homosexuality in a specific set of sources. This will be any literature produced between the 10th and the 13th century, in either the al-Andalus or the Maghreb, which falls under the style of the mujun, or obscene, literature.⁵ This automatically excludes some of the most influential poets of the period, such as Ibn Quzman or Ibn 'Ammar, both known for producing work inside the genre of the ghazal. Mujun is a much richer genre when it comes to what is perceived by Islamic jurisprudence to be lewd behavior, and that is where homosexuality falls in. With its prime examples being Ibn Hazm, Ibn Sara as-Santarini and Ahmad al-Tifashi, the focus of our study will essentially orbit these names and their own representations of what was deemed as a

⁴ AMER, Sahar, 2009, p. 12;

⁵ For more on Mujun literature, see 'CONCEPTS';

sexually deviant conduct. We must consider the use of metaphors, symbols and expressions; everything that played a role in establishing a contrast between Islamic normative and literary representation.

Chronologically, this timeframe between the 10th and 13th century is justified by a lush poetic and literary production that took roots at the time, making the Islamic Iberia and the adjacent northern African territories of significant cultural output, rivaling an homologue process taking place in Baghdad. It also makes sense to consider these two territories together, because they influenced each other mutually, not only through its cultural production, but also politically – the intervention of Berber interests is central to the understanding of the struggle for power in al-Andalus.

Finally, we go beyond the archetypal and symbolic representation of male homosexuality in our sources, to consider other important pieces of information in regards to this phenomenon in Medieval Islam. How was it perceived? Was it deemed a psychological or a physical condition, or even a combination of both? Whatever interpretation the sources allow, trying to rely as little as possible on idle speculation, to study male homosexuality in Medieval Islam every particle of information may be of increased value in order for us to understand this complex phenomenon.

As such, this thesis proposes to make a comparative approach between Islamic jurisprudence, or the normative, and the depiction of male homosexuality in literature, the representations. That comparison raises important questions: is behavioral bisexuality a reality, a means for male Muslims to escape the segregation from the other gender, imposed on them by law, and by doing so to release their sexual tension with same-sex partners? Or do these homosexual relationships occur in a power-based model, of subjugation and control between the two figures involved? How can Islamic

law be so prohibitive in regards to its opposition to sodomy, and yet an entirely different reality be depicted in Medieval mujun literature? And does politics play a role in the construction of these literary and poetic resources, particularly as an additional weapon to damage an adversary's reputation?

It would also be interesting to verify if the idea that Islam continues, in many aspects, an attitude towards sexual relationships as they were perceived by the Hellenic civilization. Concretely intertwined with the matter in study here, and with the idea of same-sex relationships conceived in a model of patriarchal domination, this thesis tries to understand the existence and role of pederasty in medieval Islam, in face of the lack of information necessary to accurately conceive a solid a model of analysis.

The idea of paradoxical ambivalence is also one of our central points: a theory stating that by nature of the coexistence between prohibitive and permissive factors, combined with a segregational and patriarchal social context, the result of morally ambivalent conducts take place. We will see if, according to our sources, this idea could explain the prevalence of male eroticism in Medieval sources from the Maghreb and al-Andalus.

Medieval history is known for having as one of its primary difficulties the lack of sources⁶, particularly in contrast to the number of documents available from the Modern period. Studying such a niche matter as that of male homosexuality, even more so with a highly prohibitive religion to influence these behaviors, is bound to have serious difficulties attached to it. On the other hand, there is a stark contrast between this prohibition and the amount of same-sex eroticism present in Medieval Arabic literature found in al-Andalus and the Maghreb.

⁶ LE GOFF, Jacques, 2010, pp. 12-21;

Bound to suffer a necessary interpretation in order to be successfully dissected, it is one of our main concerns to abstain from radical speculations. Andy Warhol famously stated that sex was the biggest nothing of all time. When we are studying human behavior within a highly normative society, however, Warhol's statement could not be further from the truth. Human sexuality offers a unique insight into social interactions, the effective influence of prohibitive jurisprudence, and may be able to indicate periods of considerable openness or closeness by the authorities of the time, judging by the manner in which these authorities exerted their control over the sexuality of the individuals.

It is in this sense that the study of male homosexuality in Medieval Islam provides a unique possibility into conveying solutions for present problems. If today the third Abrahamic religion appears not to budge in the slightest when it comes to accepting LGBT individuals as equal, and normal even, this may have not always been the case, as the sources so clearly demonstrate.

2. Concepts

2.1. Homosexuality

There exist in Arabic multiple concepts related to homosexuality, and its various forms and circumstances, but the concept of homosexuality in itself is a very recent construction, dating from the 19th century⁷, and whose direct translation into the Arabic language today can be troublesome. This problem becomes even more apparent if we try to find a solution for the medieval period; the use of the word homosexuality becomes profoundly anachronistic.

The concept of homosexuality translates the existence of an attraction, both physical and mental, for members of the same sex, and the consequent practice of sexual relations, but not excluding the possibility for chaste individuals to identify themselves as homosexuals. It applies in the same manner to both men and women.

In Arabic, the closest we can come to this is the concept of Liwat, but that in itself has fundamental differences. Firstly, the idea of Liwat excludes the existence of any form of attraction or emotions, reporting exclusively to the act of sexual penetration practiced with a same-sex partner. In addition, Liwat is only applicable to elements of the masculine sex, since there are many other concepts related to this topic. Liwat is the sin committed by the people of Lot, a definition better understood later in this essay, when we analyze the Qur'an's passages on the biblical episode of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is crucial to explain that the people of Lot, or Luti in Arabic, or those that practice the Liwat, are the inhabitants of Sodom. Therefore, the most appropriate term to serve as a translation for the Arabic Liwat would be "Sodomy".

⁷ FERAY, Jean-Claude, HERZER, Manfred, 1990, p. 27;

Alas, sodomy is a term with a deeply negative connotation in today's Western world, and it was with this in mind that we preferred the frequent use of the word homosexuality in this essay. Nonetheless, the use of the word sodomy was not wholly prescindend, following its Islamic sense, to ease the construction of this essay's discourse.

Within the greater arch of homosexuality, the Arabic language is rich in the amount of terms that bear significance to this subject, all of which can be found in medieval sources⁸ (we have highlighted the ones more relevant to this thesis in bold, and which are further expanded in this chapter):

Amrad – Beardless

***Bidal/Mubadala* – Changing between the active and passive roles**

Haba'ib – Beloved

Ghulaam – Young male servants in Paradise

***Liwat* – Male Homosexuality (active)**

***Luti* – Male Homosexual (active)**

***Ma'bun* – Male Homosexual (passive)**

***Mukannath* – Effeminate man / hermaphrodite**

Nisa' Mudhakkarat – Masculine women

***Qatim* – Male Homosexual (passive) in al-Andalus' dialect**

***Rijal Mu'annathin* – Effeminate men**

Sahiqat – Lesbian

Sahq – Lesbianism

***Ubnah* – Male Homosexuality (passive)**

⁸ AMER, Sahar, 2009, p. 19;

Zina – unlawful sexual intercourse (extramarital and premarital sex)

2.2. Medieval Islam

Throughout this thesis, the concept of medieval Islam is mentioned. It should be noted that, as all generalizations, it would be incorrect to understand this as the whole of the Islamic religion throughout the entirety of the medieval period. In this thesis, medieval Islam is used to facilitate our discourse, and specifically refers to Sunni Islam as practiced in the Maghreb and al-Andalus, between the 10th and 13th centuries. Any other meaning different from this one will be clearly identified.

2.3. Effeminate

When considering a study of archetypes and social representations, namely in either literature or poetry as is the subject of this thesis, the issue of prejudice becomes central, around which sensible discourse must be constructed. These social representations constitute preset values held by an individual when producing his work, and it is in this sense that the use of the word effeminate appears in this thesis.

There are no biological set of psychological characteristics that can strictly be pointed to either the male or the female gender.⁹ When the term effeminate appears in our discourse, it signifies something entirely different: what social behavior was acceptable, to a Muslim living in the Medieval period, or even expected, from a Muslim man and a Muslim woman. Islam configures a highly patriarchal society with gender roles being defined in the principal and primary source of law: the Qur'an.

As such, when a man somehow exhibited a behavior that was contrary to what would be typically expected, or somewhat exceeded the very limits imposed by this

⁹ HALPERN, D.F., et al., 2007, pp. 1-51;

constraining patriarchy, he would be cast in the eyes of others not as a man, but something different. When this difference meant an approximation or mimicking of the behavior typically expected from women, these men would then be considered effeminate.

This term is also derogatory, and that is of fundamental importance in the context of this thesis. While equating traditional female characteristics with something not to be desired with now can be regarded as highly offensive in many countries of the West, due to the efforts for gender equality pushed by Feminists and other groups, this was not the case in medieval Islam. A woman is considered half the measure of a man¹⁰, their testimony is less accurate¹¹, they are mostly unclean¹², they are to be treated by their husbands as he wishes to treat his farm¹³, they must share a husband but a husband can never share his wife¹⁴, and more. This does not mean that Islam does not respect or uphold the integrity of women, and many argue so, it just ascertains that it is an extremely relative position in regards to the culture and religion which we are studying, and that should be kept at the forefront of one's mind.

2.4. Sexual roles (Active/Passive)

In the context of our analysis, the concepts of passive and active are often used in regards to the positions assumed by the homosexual male partners in their relationship. This is important because the original Arabic vocabulary of our sources marks a clear distinction, the reason for it being one of the focuses of our study.

¹⁰ *Qur'an* 4:11, 4:176

¹¹ *Ibidem*, 2:282

¹² *Ibidem*, 5:6

¹³ *Ibidem*, 2:223

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 4:3

Passive is the partner who receives the penetration, while the active is the one responsible for penetrating. The first is also related to the idea of submission, while the second tends to suppose dominance.¹⁵ A partner who is willing to take part in both roles is referred to as a versatile.

This is important when trying to configure a model where the existence of male homosexual relationships in medieval Islam is influenced by the notion of patriarchal power, or dominion over the other.

In the context of a pederastic relationship, the Erastes is the active, and the Eromenos the passive.

2.5. Pederasty

In Anthropology, the study of pederasty has been subject to much debate. Homosexuality has been divided into three different categories: age-structured, egalitarian and gender-structured.¹⁶ Pederasty is defined as belonging into the first, the prime example of a male age-structured relationship. While it could be mistaken with pedophilia when studying the phenomenon of pederasty in Classical societies, for example, pedophilia constitutes an entirely different category, considered a grossly pathological¹⁷ condition.

In Classical civilization, pederasty prompted different opinions and, consequently, behaviors from society. The most extensive source we have on the subject from an Athenian's point of view is Aeschines "Against Timarchus", of profound importance since it cites a considerable bulk of Athenian law.¹⁸ In it,

¹⁵ BULLOUGH, Vern L., et al., 1994, p. 280;

¹⁶ GREENBERG, David F, 1990, p. 25;

¹⁷ GORER, Geoffrey, 1966, pp.186–187;

¹⁸ ADAMS, Charles D., 1919, pp. 24-31;

Aeschines argues that the physical consummation of a pederastic relationship between an older man and a youth would be a source of shame for both, and something entirely undesirable. Plato, however, who was responsible for important writings on this subject, argued that there were many advantages to such relationship, nonetheless forming a firm bond of friendship between both partners that would last forever.¹⁹

Pederasty was also undeniably linked with politics. In Crete, for example, it was encouraged as a means of population control: “And the lawgiver has devised many wise measures to secure the benefit of moderation at table, and the segregation of the women in order that they may not bear many children, for which purpose he instituted association with the male sex.”²⁰

Pederasty in Islam, however, is still a remarkably obscure subject, with very little research done about it during the Medieval period. As such, it is one of the points of this thesis to fully understand the impact of Classical heritage in the Islamic phenomenon, and it is in this sense that the term is employed throughout this thesis.

2.6. Archetype

The main subject of analysis is the usage of symbolic archetypes by Arabic authors as commonplaces for the idea of a homosexual individual in a literary context. It is a form of prejudiced construction relating to certain themes, settings, elements or even people.

Since many of these archetypes lack an evident meaning within the texts in which they are used, as is, for example, the case of the gazelle and the fact that it is a

¹⁹ PLATO, *Phaedrus*, p. 101

²⁰ ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, p. 132

metaphor for a younger boy, it means that the author expected his readers and listeners to be fully aware of what he meant. These archetypes represent social expectations for the fulfillment of certain roles, or an expected behavior.

Some of these archetypes predate the rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, being featured in Jahili²¹ poetry, such as the mentioned gazelle.²²

2.7. Literature

Literature is used to encompass both poetry and prose, and these should only be distinguished as separate in our considerations when specifically mentioned.

There are distinguished forms of literature in Arabic of heightened interest to this thesis, and their general characteristics pinpoint some of the themes that they deal with. These are:

Mujun - Mujun (or Mujuniyyat) is the most significant literary theme of this thesis. According to the Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature, it is defined as “open and unabashed indulgence in prohibited pleasures, particularly the drinking of wine and, above all, sexual profligacy.”²³

Literally, mujun means “shamelessness” in Arabic. Such literature tends to describe a deeply hedonistic behavior, makes frequent use of explicit vocabulary, and is often ascribed a primary humorous intent.²⁴ Features characteristic elements of

²¹ Jahili, or “ignorant”, is the poetry written before Muhammad’s revelations, in the time known as Jahiliyya;

²² HORNE, Charles F., 1917, pp. 19-40;

²³ MEISSAMI, Julie Scott, STARKEY, Paul [eds.], 1998, pp. 546-547;

²⁴ MÉNDEZ, Jerónimo, 2012, pp. 119-129;

sukhf literature, and is now regarded by various contemporary Islamic scholars as too licentious.²⁵

Sukhf - Sukhf is the literature whose primary concern relies on its acidic tone, fundamental scatological approach to its own humor, and not shying away from the obscene.²⁶ Frequently discredited amongst contemporary Islamic scholars as lacking poetic quality in terms of its form, it has recently become the subject of interest through varied studies, particularly its origin in pre-Islamic Arabia.

Khamriyyat - This is the literature that celebrates the drinking of wine, making it one of its primary symbols, alongside the effects of inebriation.²⁷ Sharing many traits with some of Classical literature, particularly when raucous orgies and drunken scenes are set, it is often referred to by Western scholars as Bacchus literature. Khamriyyat may feature some elements of sukhf literature, and postulates the concept of khala'a, the rejection of social constraints.

'Udhri - 'Udhri literature is often translated as that of courtly love. It celebrates love for no reason but its own sake, and frequently had the implicit significance of love as a desire that should not be acted upon²⁸, so that it was kept most noble and chaste.

There are strong indications suggesting that 'udhri literature made its way from al-Andalus, where it was already of extreme popularity and encompassed in both poetry and treatises, to European courts through France, being the basis of what would be much of the West's own literary production on the subject at that time.²⁹

²⁵ SIKER, Jeffrey S., 2006, p. 131;

²⁶ ANTOON, Sinan, 2014, pp. 93-125;

²⁷ KENNEDY, Philip F., 1997, p. 77;

²⁸ VON GRUNEBaum, G. E., 1952, p. 204;

²⁹ MENOCAL, Maria Rosa, 2003, p. 81;

Ghazal - Often short and graceful in form³⁰, ghazal poetry is generally concerned with the pain of loss or separation, the beauty of love despite the suffering it brings, or with illicit / unattainable love. All love poetry can be considered ghazal.³¹

³⁰ “Ghazal”, in Encyclopaedia Britannica Online [seen August 2014];

³¹ BEESTON, A. F. L. et al., 2010, p. 522;

3. State of the Art

Academic interest in exploring the history of sexuality beyond the normative and orthodox limits of heterosexuality is a relatively recent enterprise. The defining turning point can only be pin-pointed to what was one of the first forays beyond these limits, and still is the most highly regarded standard of approach to the relationship of humanity and its varied sexualities throughout the ages – we are talking, of course, of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*.

First published in France, 1976, its aims are wide in scope, but it constituted a successful attempt to align the individual, his desires, fears, hopes and any other inner and external conditionals, with multiple socio-cultural phenomena and the historical heritage that weighed so heavily on personal choice. Foucault himself never hid his interest in the construction of the idea of the individual³², and his pursuit in understanding how the inner and external worlds collide.

However, and in the context of the issue which this thesis aims to explore, *The History of Sexuality* has an even greater importance, not only symbolic, but also immensely intellectual.

One of the focal points in Foucault's discourse was to disprove what he labeled the "repressive hypothesis". In his view, western scholars had built a lie, claiming that western civilization, particularly since the 17th century, never brought to light the individual's desires in regards to his sexuality. Contrastingly, Foucault defends the opposite: that with the gradual rise of the bourgeois class in the West,

³² FOUCAULT, Michel, 1982, pp. 777-778;

came an opening of an individuals to pursue the significance of their own natures, and at the very heart of this was their own sexuality.³³

As such, we come to Foucault's centerpiece importance in this thesis: his was the first academic foray into the vast complexity of homosexual expressions in the western world. It was part of this understanding of the place of the individual in his time, to ascertain the own complexities of each individual. Studying the Classical civilization, Foucault raised many important questions, some of which are still to find definite answers today.

How can, then, a work that merely touches on the fringes of any other reality beyond the borders of the western world, be considered so important in the context of a thesis that aims to highlight the representation of homosexuality in Medieval Islam? Perhaps the answer would only be made clear when we consider the fourth part of *The History of Sexuality: The Deployment of Sexuality*.

In this part, Foucault explores society's pursuit of the verity of sex. What that means is that he attempts to describe why we, as a species, have such a great interest in understanding some highly rationalized factor behind what is generally perceived as an essentially natural, irrational and even animalistic impulse – our desire for sex. And in that same chapter, Foucault bridges the gap, defending that power is the most weighing factor in sexual relations³⁴, and society's need to legislate on sexual matters stems precisely from that – because western society's true bulwark that sustains the power of the elites is law, and thus from the 17th century onward there are attempts to further legislate on sexual matters as had not previously been witnessed.

³³ FOUCAULT, Michel, 1979, p. 49;

³⁴ Idem, *Ibidem*, pp. 77-91;

Thus, Michel Foucault's defining work gave rise "to a new era in the study of the history of sexuality"³⁵. His contributions, in regards to our understanding of human sexuality, permitted an exportation of his rational model to study other epochs and geographies outside what *The History of Sexuality* was only able to contain, before the author's early and regrettable loss. It is an indispensable tool if we are to study the complexity of homosexual relationships, and their link to the perception of power, in Medieval al-Andalus and the Maghreb.

Before we head into the body of work pertaining specifically to the study of homosexuality and Islam, the seminal works by Dover on the subject of homosexuality and Classical civilization must be considered, if for no other reason than the thesis that Islam is, in many ways, a continuation of various socio-cultural traditions and practices that were of fundamental importance in Ancient Greece.

Dover's first major contribution to the study of homosexuality in Ancient Greece, particularly through the analysis of social conventions and traditions in which pederasty was configured, happened to coincide with the translation into English of Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, and thus it is fair to also consider it in the same optic as we look into the French historian's work: one of the first modern and scholarly approach into the study of human sexuality.³⁶

Some of the elements of major importance in Dover's work were the inclusion of a vast collection of archaeological sources, such as vases, besides an exhaustive analysis of textual sources, including legislative documents and dramatic plays.

³⁵ HALPERIN, David M., 1990, p. 4;

³⁶ THORNTON, Bruce S., 1997, pp. 256–258;

With particular interest to the context of our thesis, were his studies into the process of the establishment of the roles of lover and beloved – *erastes* and *eromenos*, respectively - in a pederastic relationship, which could be linked with Foucault's thesis of sexuality as a primary manifestation of power and dominion. He also made clear that homosexuality was not wholly accepted, as in what the concept means today in regards to the emotional and physical attraction to members of the same sex, but was an institution with specific purposes and immensely ritualized. Of particular importance, is the fact that when a young Athenian maintained his behavior as the beloved of the relationship even after he had reached his maturity, he would be ridiculed³⁷, as it happens in several of Aristophanes' plays.

His findings, although some of them have been contested³⁸ and others continuously proven right³⁹, are of invaluable significance if we are to provide a remotely accurate link between the occurrence of homosexual relationships between men in Classical civilization and what we verify in the medieval Islamic Mediterranean, with an obvious focus on the Maghreb and al-Andalus.

Perhaps the most comprehensive work written on the subject of sexuality and its relationship with the Qur'an, by a Moroccan-born scholar, is Abdelwahab Bouhdiba's *Sexuality in Islam*.

First published in 1975, this book is divided into two parts: the first examines the normative side of Islam, the theoretical stance of the sacred scripture, and the importance of religious concepts such as purity in the perception of human physical desire as a manifestation of those same concepts. The second part is strictly focused

³⁷ DOVER, K. J., 1989, pp. 30-44;

³⁸ SCRUTON, Roger, 1994, p. 308;

³⁹ THORNTON, Bruce S., 1997, p. 264;

on sexual practices, and aims to show that the theory and what truly happens seldom go hand in hand.

Many of Boudhiba's ideas are frankly interesting and thought provoking, particularly because they come from another point of view besides that of the western Judeo-Christian matrix. This allows the author to postulate on the fact that Islam lacks an idea of original sin⁴⁰, and that if humans stray from what is deemed to be a righteous conduct, that is a choice enacted through the freedom granted by God. This is an integral part to understand Islamic attitude towards moral deviances, as homosexuality is regarded in the Qur'an, and how one must be aware of this fundamental fact when studying such issues.

Sexuality in Islam also provides extremely important considerations on the external factors that have a significant impact on the occurrence of homosexual relationships between men in Islamic societies, outside the boundaries of physical attraction, such as the role of the segregation of men and women and the pressure imposed on young men by the need to constitute marriage.⁴¹

However, there are underlying matters to Bouhdiba's work that raise some concerns when viewed under contemporary academic lenses.

While much of the author's discourse is highly rationalized and well thought, his intellectual framework transpires certain hindrances when drawing up conclusions that are hard to separate from the author's personal faith. This is nothing out of the ordinary, of course, for if the historian should always strive to be as exempt from any form of ideology or political view, the fact is that the human factor always weighs

⁴⁰ BOUHDIBA, Abdelwahab, 2004, p. 59;

⁴¹ Idem, *Ibidem*, pp. 88-91;

more heavily, and it would be naïve to assume that anyone's work can be wholly exempt from their personal interests or agenda – even if it was not done on purpose.

This issue transpires on some of the author's reluctance to consider homosexuality as something other than a deviant behavior. He cannot successfully depart from this paradigm when going through his analysis of various aspects related with male same-sex relationships, although, and this should be insisted upon, he still provides one of the most complete overviews of the subject that has been written, and that is a remarkable achievement for a book with almost four decades.

But *Sexuality in Islam* is also subject to internal contradiction. In “Chapter 4: The frontier of the sexes”, Bouhdiba claims that in Islam the cosmos is made two separate energies: the masculine and the feminine⁴². Everything exists within those boundaries, according to the Qur'an. However, he goes on to explore some of the specificities regarding the condition of hermaphroditism in Islam, and fails to articulate this with a dualistic cosmos made up from the masculine and the feminine. Hermaphrodites pose a loophole, and, in his words, “the virilization of woman, the need to dress as a man, that is to say, the search for the external forms of masculinity, are a more or less satisfied revolt against femininity and the status accorded the weaker sex.”⁴³ This highly simplified and reductive observation fails to grasp hermaphroditism as a biological condition, looking at it from a strictly socio-cultural prism, which is much at fault.

While Abdelwahab Bouhdiba's work still occupies an immensely important role in the understanding of the Islamic perspectives on the issue of sexuality, it is also lacking in many aspects, such as the role of minorities in that same perception.

⁴² Idem, *Ibidem*, pp. 30-36;

⁴³ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 40;

Bruce Dunne is the author of the article “Power and Sexuality in the Middle East”, which springs up from his interaction with an Egyptian man in today’s Cairo about the issue of homosexuality, and looks into medieval Islam to understand the source of the Egyptian’s point of view.

Dunne first notes that modern Egyptians have a view informed by a sexual ethos with antecedents in Greek and late Roman Antiquity.⁴⁴ He maintains that this happens due to the pressures of a rigorous patriarchal society, promoting the masculinization of power and inserts all human relations into its sphere.

Contextualizing the extent of that masculine and exclusive perception of power is the idea that female sexuality, if left unsatisfied or uncontrolled, could lead to a calamitous result, which results in social chaos. Dunne claims this stems not only from an archaic ethos that seeped into Islam, but also from the Qur’an itself.

Perhaps to achieve controversy, the author postulates what can only be described as a phallic source and obsession in regards to Islamic society, since sexuality in Islam is itself defined according to the domination by or the reception of the penis in the sexual act.⁴⁵ He defends that sex takes place between dominant, free adult men, and their subservient counterparts and social inferiors: these can be wives, concubines, boys, prostitutes or slaves.

Finally, Dunne considers the case of effeminate men in this patriarchal society, arguing that in exteriorizing a deviant behavior, these effeminates chose to prescind from what could be their position amongst the highest hierarchical social strata: the masculine sex.

⁴⁴ DUNNE, Bruce, 1998, p. 9;

⁴⁵ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 10;

Dunne's article raises important questions regarding the external factors that shape the complexity of homosexual manifestations in Islamic society. His thesis, in which he defends that a classical ethos of patriarchy has seeped into Islamic society, is often raised by other authors. It is an interesting model of analysis, which has been successfully applied into the study of homosexuality in medieval Islam, particularly on the problem of pederasty. It expands on Michel Foucault's own thesis of sexuality as an individual's expression of his power.

On the subject of literature and poetry in the Islamic west, one of the most important works published on the issue is Teresa Garulo's *La Literatura de al-Andalus Durante el Siglo XI*.

Garulo focuses her work on the study and analysis of literature in 11th century al-Andalus, but does not strictly circumscribe herself to it, since she repeatedly makes reference to prominent figures from the 12th and 13th centuries. She does so in a strict comparative analysis, and it is actually very revealing and validating of her points.

The first problems identified by Garulo when studying Arabic literature in al-Andalus are precisely the difficulties of the transmission of that same work. She claims that there were more than two hundred and fifty poets in the 11th century alone⁴⁶, however, only a very finite fraction of these works survived to our day. This is justified with a utilitarian view of poetry, as a highly instrumental political tool, which resulted in romantic poetry being often discarded from later anthologies in exchange for panegyrics.

Another of the problems when examining Andalusian literature is the lack of studies on the Eastern influences in place. The weight of 'Abbassid literature, for

⁴⁶ GARULO, Teresa, 1998, pp. 10-24;

instance, has never been appropriately studied in regards to al-Andalus, and Garulo sees this as a hindrance in the understanding of the Iberian works.

Other issue raised by Garulo is that although scholarly interest in Islamic Iberia has seen resurgence in the last two decades, there are yet to appear any studies on the themes present in poetry. The same difficulty is faced in the making of the present thesis, and while more research has been done since the publication of Teresa Garulo's book, the gap in studies is still evident.

Finally, Garulo defends that the Taifa period witnessed an internalization of the Arabic tradition in al-Andalus, which then radiated to the entire Maghreb⁴⁷, to such a degree that both geographical areas bear little variation in regards to their literary output. She also argues that, for a researcher, the literary value of the sources should be more important than either the documental or historical values.

Turning our scopes to works more focused on the subject of homosexuality in Islam specifically, one of the first of these was what editors Arno Schmitt and Jehoeda Sofer published in 1992, *Sexuality and eroticism among males in Moslem societies*.

A compilation of various essays by a wide array of authors from different nationalities, this book was amongst the first of its kind. It attempted to create something unlike anything that had been, and contrastingly with Abdelwahab Bouhdiba's book, it was primarily written from the perspective of a Western look towards the other.

There are several flaws within this book, no less than the fact that the content is quite uneven. The authors behind the articles belong to varied backgrounds, not all

⁴⁷ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 216;

being historians or anthropologists; in fact, many are not even scholars. The scientific relevance of some of them is even easily questionable, as they are no more than the expressed opinions of men who travelled to an Islamic country, and claim to have established contact with homosexual individuals, becoming aware of their experiences and their difficulties within these same countries. These are not without interest, of course, but how helpful they can be in the understanding of deeply rooted stigma and cultural values is hard to ascertain.

The book is also essentially focused in the contemporary world, failing often to see the correlation between the past and the present. This is particularly evident when one of the authors writes about Syrian men who dress as women for a party⁴⁸, and yet offers no social, cultural or historical context into that event, and we are left blind to its real value.

This body of work encounters contradiction in more ways. Lawrence Conrad, who reviewed this book for the *Cambridge Journals of Medical History*, points out the following: “(...) while ethnic stereotypes are repeatedly rejected in principle, they are often invoked in practice.”⁴⁹

This book is, as we have seen, not without some highly questionable points. However, it develops an interpretative paradigm that is exceedingly resounding with some of the elucidations developed throughout this thesis. Male homosexual relationships in Islam occur in stark different contexts than what happens in the West, first and foremost because the notion of homosexuality as it is accepted today, that is, a phenomenon that happens in the same physical and psychological manner as heterosexuality, does not exist. Homosexuality in Islam, according to this work, is

⁴⁸ SCHMITT, Arno, SOFER, Jehoeda, 1992, p. 52;

⁴⁹ CONRAD, Lawrence I., 1994, pp. 116–117;

linked to a relief of the tensions imposed on young men, above all else, by the societal constraints placed upon the religious institution of marriage. The general consensus between many of the texts in this work is that these male-to-male relations can even be tolerated, in the very specific context that is the fact that one of the partners must always be the active; his behavior confined to the private sphere i. e. not publicly acknowledged, and the passive partner must be considered of lesser demeanor, either young boys or an effeminate. There is also some degree of acceptance towards foreigners.

Sexuality and eroticism among males in Moslem societies is an important contribution to the understanding of the complexities behind homosexual relationships in the Islamic world. Although it focuses on the contemporary, and its major fault is precisely a lack of depth in regards to the analysis of the impact of the past in present reality, the interpretative paradigm exerts powerful echoes in this thesis.

Nicole Kligerman's *Homosexuality in Islam: a difficult paradox* accounts for an interesting summary of the theoretical aspects surrounding the Qur'an, its rejection of sodomy, and the paradoxical contrast that can be verified in Islamic societies. However, it shows nothing innovative in its approach, draws no significant conclusions, and has a flawed bibliography.

Kligerman's approach to the Qur'an, exploring its condemnation and what she considers to be complete rejection towards the people of Lot, and to highlight the loopholes that permeate the religious text and might be considered as less normative in regards to the sexual relations between men, is very abbreviated, but nonetheless forward in dealing with these questions.

The main thesis behind this article is that the status of homosexual relationships in Islam goes against the religion's intent of actually promoting sexual relationships between men and women.⁵⁰ To support this, she points to the Qur'an's own declaration as a religion of nature, and hence abhorrent of the relations that negate the sense of natural as a reproductive force.

However, Kligerman's article has severe faults. Besides the use of certain questionable bibliography⁵¹, she completely ignores the role of the hadith in the conception of Islamic law in regards to homosexuality. If the Qur'an lacks any form of legal prescription towards the punishment of homosexual relationships, the same does not happen with the hadith, some of which form the basis for much of the anti-homosexuality legislation that we see in place in some Islamic countries.

As a summary of what has been written by other authors, Kligerman's contribution is useful and insightful, but it disappoints if we are to expect that some progress be found in this field's research.

In 2003, *Homosexuality & Civilization*, by Louis Crompton, was published. An ambitious and comprehensive work, with a content ranging from Ancient Greece to the end of the Enlightenment, and studying far beyond the frontiers of the western world, as it includes a chapter on the Pre-Meiji Japan, Crompton's foray into the

⁵⁰ KLIGERMAN, Nicole, 2010, p. 54;

⁵¹ Two Wikipedia articles are cited at the end of Kligerman's article: "Homosexuality and World Religions", and "Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni"; although Wikipedia has grown over the years so that its faults have been gradually reduced, we must not forget that it lacks any credible revision of the articles, does not concern itself with the scientificity of its claims, and its content is subject to change by anyone with no more than basic access to the internet. The fact that Kligerman's article was published, and the reviewing board of the Macalester Islam Journal ignored this grave fault, does little to credit that publication as well;

subject of homosexuality in al-Andalus is one of the most complete overviews of the matter.

Crompton defends that there exists a “paradoxical ambivalence”⁵² in Islam, and this is the main point of his thesis. He argues that Islam has all the severity of the other two Abrahamic religions, and yet in al-Andalus saw the enthusiastic cultivation of erotic poetry, rich in homoerotic symbols, much like what happened in other countries of Arabic language.

To support this, Crompton goes through the history of Lot as it appears in the Qur’an, noting how the cause of Sodom’s destruction changed from the generic lust which is described in the Old Testament, to specifically designate the “lust for men”, tying the narrative to an exclusive homosexual connotation. He then not only goes through the importance of the hadith in prescribing specific jurisdiction to deal with homosexual practices, since the Qur’an lacks any such jurisprudence, but also weighs the influence of the jurisprudential schools of thought in this regard – not only Malikism, which was the only that operated in al-Andalus, but also Hanbalism, for both schools ascribe the same sentence to sodomy: stoning. In this regard, Crompton concludes: “Thus, through early judicial theory and practice, Old Testament severity came, at least in theory, to dominate the legal side of Islam.”⁵³

Crompton’s study into the manifestation of homoeroticism in poetry and literature is, perhaps, the strongest point of his work, and the one with most value to this thesis. He goes through multiple sources, discoursing vastly on Ibn Hazm’s *The Ring of the Dove*, to point out that although there is a general appreciation for the male beauty from male poets, there is a stressed importance played on the role of

⁵² CROMPTON, Louis, 2009, p. 161;

⁵³ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 162;

chastity in regards to this attraction. Ibn Hazm's treaty is essential in arriving at such conclusion, for he repeatedly emphasis the importance of chastity, even if the object of desire is a woman (unmarried, of course), but Crompton cites other sources to back up this idea.

Crompton argues that the source materials show no change in the outpour of homoerotic poetry from the Almoravid rulers to the Almohads, since both epochs feature prominent works by distinct authors.⁵⁴

Another of Crompton's invaluable contribution to the study of homosexuality in al-Andalus is his comparative analysis of Hebrew and Arabic poetry. He demonstrably argues that there is a shared universe of symbols, where the biblical Song of Songs is the perfect source for the poets' appreciation of young boys, and he claims that "Arab poets occasionally wrote love poems to Jewish youths; the Hebrew poets reciprocate by professing their love for handsome young Muslims, though they speak only of kisses and embraces and stop short of Arab directness in sexual matters."⁵⁵

Crompton ends his analysis of al-Andalus by evidencing the contrast between medieval Christianity and Islam in regards to sexuality and slavery: the first strictly forbade it, while the second was actually very permissive. Islam's openness to sexual relationships with one's slaves is one of the major loopholes for the occurrence of homosexuality, since the master was permitted to make equal use of his male slaves as he did of the female.

Homosexuality & Civilization and its study of the Islamic Iberian Peninsula is remarkably complete, for a work that spans more than two thousand years of History.

⁵⁴ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 168;

⁵⁵ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 169;

Further ahead in this thesis, we will see how Crompton's model of paradoxical ambivalence is actually one of the most accurate approaches to homosexuality in Islam, when we compare both jurisprudential and literary sources and are faced with their blatant contradictions.

Daniel Eisenberg is the author of two articles on the subject of homosexuality in al-Andalus.

On the first, *La Escondida Senda: Homosexuality in Spanish History and Culture*, Eisenberg makes a brief overview of Spain (as in Iberian Peninsula) from prehistory to the aftermath of Franco's regime.

The author begins with some easily questionable affirmations; that al-Andalus is a vanished civilization, i. e. it has no heritage left, and that it is a missing chapter in the History of Spain⁵⁶. In regards to the first of these observations, it takes only a brief peek into the Portuguese or Spanish vocabulary to see that al-Andalus has left a significantly enduring mark, which has lasted to this very day. On his second claim about the obscurantism surrounding al-Andalus, this too is an unsubstantiated consideration. There are many things that we do not know about al-Andalus, but at least in the last decade and a half there has been a rich outpour of bibliography on the subject, a trend that certainly benefitted Eisenberg's research and he should have taken that into account.

On the matter of male homosexuality, Eisenberg that al-Andalus' permissiveness stems from the very beginning of the Muslim invasion in 711. His thesis uses the fact that many of the sources on the invasion regard the acceptance of the newcomers and the oppressive rule of the Visigoths, and the author assumes from

⁵⁶ EISENBERG, Daniel, 1999, p.4;

this that, from the very onset, Islam brought freedom to the Iberian Peninsula. This is a rash assumption to identify the reasons behind the productive outpour of homoerotic literature, and cannot but feel extremely simplistic in its approach to what are very specific strings of the social fabric in al-Andalus, themselves much more relevant in understanding how homosexuality became to be so ripe on the region.

When addressing Islam's prohibition of homosexuality, Eisenberg sole reference is the Qur'an, ignoring the fundamental importance of the hadith. In his view, those in power had no interest in imposing such prohibition in practice, since many of the rulers of al-Andalus were known to keep catamites. This explained why the practice of homosexuality became so prevalent, because "the practices of the rulers were adopted by those who aspired to power and influence."⁵⁷

Eisenberg's second article of interest to this thesis is his entrance in the *Encyclopedia of Medieval Iberia*.

Much more succinct than the first, and following the same line of thought, another hypothesis is advanced in regards to homosexuality in al-Andalus: that, in part, it was one of the reasons that ultimately ignited the Reconquista, and the Castilian emphasis on virginity and marriage, among other things⁵⁸. While some sources do indicate that al-Andalus was perceived as a place of boundless luxury and other vices, particularly from beyond the Pyrenees, to pin point something that was still the expression of a minority as one of the major causal points for the definition of Castilian culture and the opposition from Christianity to Islam is highly inaccurate. From this article, what is insightful is Eisenberg's considerations into Sephardic poetry, and its relationship with Arabic counterparts – but again, with few references

⁵⁷ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 5;

⁵⁸ EISENBERG, Daniel, 2003, pp. 398-399;

and very succinct in the presentation of its suppositions, the lackluster quality of the article does nothing to significantly advance research in regards to homosexuality in al-Andalus.

As one of the major sources for the understanding of the expression of homosexuality in al-Andalus between the 10th and 13th centuries, Ibn Hazm's *The Ring of the Dove* is of paramount importance. In 2003, Camilla Adang published a paper about the Zahiri methodology and its effect in Ibn Hazm's intellectual discourse.

Adang, in contrast with some of the articles previously considered in this chapter, not only analyses the legal status of homosexuality in the Qur'an, but also in the body of hadith and in the posture adopted by the main jurisprudential schools in Islam. Her research raises an important question on the issue of Malikism, since its preferred sentence for sodomy was stoning, however, this is the only significant school in al-Andalus and that sentence is not recorded in any source, strengthening the idea of the paradoxical ambivalence.

This paradoxical ambivalence weighs not only on medieval Islam as a whole, at least in al-Andalus and the Maghreb, but also on the individuals themselves, and such is the case for Ibn Hazm. Adang, citing some of Louis Crompton's own research which we have also explored in this thesis, notes that Ibn Hazm discourses on the matter of love as one of the noblest sentiments, ascribing no barriers even in the case of same-sex affections; however, he is also very strict on the matter of acting on that love, i. e. consummating it.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ ADANG, Camilla, 2003, p. 11;

Adang justifies Ibn Hazm's attitude in his own beliefs as a Zahiri.⁶⁰ Dissecting some of Ibn Hazm's works on jurisprudence, the author carefully studies the problem of law and homosexuality into the minutest details of the Zahiri interpretation. While the issue of the various legal opinions and the impending influence of the schools of jurisprudence in the complexity of homosexuality in al-Andalus rest outside the direct concerns of this thesis, Adang's article is invaluable for the understanding of Ibn Hazm's perspective and the political and religious nature of *The Ring of the Dove*. No other scholar has achieved this level of depth in their research of Ibn Hazm's life and work, and many have failed to better understand his intent due to a insufficient knowledge of the individual.

While the apparent intent of Adang's article is not to study homosexuality per se, it constitutes a seminal step into its understanding, and has been of major help in the development of the present thesis.

⁶⁰ Zahirism advocates a literal interpretation of revealed sources: the Qur'an and the Sunnah;

4. Sexual normative in the Qur'an and Hadiths

Islam, in stark contrast with Christianity, but somehow similar to what we see taking place in Judaism, benefits from an extensive body of religious jurisprudence, fundamentally described in its own corpus of religious texts: the Quran, Islam's holy book, and the hadiths, sayings attributed to the Prophet and people close to him. In addition to these two fundamental sources, the weight of the Fatwas in Islamic law cannot be discarded. This entire group of important sources is fundamentally limited, in regard to sexuality, to the marital relations between men and women, but not exclusively.

It is of utmost importance, before all, to highlight an important fact: Islam is not made of an entirely homogenous body of laws. It encloses, within itself, various divisions and minorities with particular influence and relevance in certain geographical spaces. If the vast majority of Muslims belongs to the Sunni branch, they themselves have more diverse views on matters of sexuality, than those who follow the Shiite branch.⁶¹ Although many of the aspects studied below do not relate directly to the problem of homosexuality in Islam, I consider the inclusion of their specificities in this chapter to be of great importance, providing a better view over Islam's different mentalities and ways of dealing with matters of sexuality. This is a subject not to be viewed behind the Westernized lenses we are used to, otherwise we will incur in profound anachronisms and false conclusions.

⁶¹ This essay studies Medieval Islam in a generalized form, so most of the considerations presented are based on the Sunni branch;

First, it should be noted the profound difference between Medieval Europe and the Middle East, for in Islam, sex, in itself, is not a taboo subject; its practice is indeed encouraged by the holy scriptures, if it is performed within the matrimonial context. As a result, for example, we find a stern oppositions and voiced critics against people who follow an ascetic life, since the disdain they show for their own body is read as a disdain for the spirit, since Islam is a naturalist religion. Abdelwahab Bouhdiba defends the idea that, according to the Quran, “the sacred mission of sexuality is to propagate life, to multiply existence. In assuming it, man takes part in a divine work whose majesty is enough to give a new meaning to his existence.”⁶² Prophet Muhammad himself had a particularly active sexual life, as attested by the birth of six sons to his first wife, Khadija, and the fact that he married a total of twelve wives.⁶³

Another interesting contrast between the Christian West and the Oriental Islam during Medieval times is that the jurisprudential Islamic corpus is much more clearly on the importance of sex as part of married life. If in Europe we see several Christian thinkers defending a chaste life for women who became widows, in Islam we see the opposite; Muhammad’s first wife, Khadija, was fifteen years older than him, and had already been widow to two different husbands, which left her in control of considerable economic means. It is very clear the reproductive intent of marriage, but it should be taken into notice the fact that both men and women are awarded the right of having an orgasm, and if it does not occur, this can constitute a valid argument to begin a divorce’s process. Despite this clear purpose for sex, the use of

⁶² BOUHDIBA, Abdelwahab, 2004, p. 13;

⁶³ ROGERSON, Barnaby, 2003, pp. 68-87;

contraceptive methods is permitted in Islam, particularly in the manner of *coitus interruptus*, supported by the following hadith:

*“A man said: Apostle of Allah, I have a slave-girl and I withdraw the penis from her (while having intercourse), and I dislike that she becomes pregnant. I intend (by intercourse) what the men intend by it. The Jews say that withdrawing the penis (al-‘Azl) is burying the living girls on a small scale. He (the Prophet) said: The Jews told a lie. If Allah intends to create it, you cannot turn it away.”*⁶⁴

If the *coitus interruptus* (known as al-‘Azl, in Arabic) is approved by Islam, and is the object of study by several medieval medical treaties, the practice of abortion, however, is highly contested. There are verses within the Quran reproving such practice if justified by poverty or impossibility to provide for the child.

*“Say, "Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you. [He commands] that you not associate anything with Him, and to parents, good treatment, and do not kill your children out of poverty; We will provide for you and them. And do not approach immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed. And do not kill the soul, which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right. This has He instructed you that you may use reason.”*⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Abu Dawud, *Sunan*, 11:2166;

⁶⁵ *Qur'an*, 6:151;

However, and somehow contradictory to the above verses, there is also a famous passage in the Qur'an, which ascertains the fetus' absence of a soul. This can be used as a justification for abortion.

“And certainly did We create man from an extract of clay. Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging. Then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump [of flesh], and We made [from] the lump, bones, and We covered the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is Allah , the best of creators.”⁶⁶

Note that in Medieval Islam, a pregnancy resulting from rape is not subject to abortion, because the son is considered legitimate anyway.⁶⁷

In a first observation, about the question of reproduction and the use of contraceptives, this is useful to illustrate the following: the argument for reproduction cannot be the only one used to condemn homosexual relations, from religious sources. If reproduction is indeed one of the pillars of matrimony, it is not, however, obligatory.

About the prohibitions related to sexual intercourse, Islamic jurisprudence is quite clear: sex is wholly forbidden during the menstrual period, during the first forty days that follow child-birth⁶⁸, while performing the Hajj pilgrimage, or during the daytime fast of Ramadan. The possible ties connecting these prohibitions with Greco-Roman culture, in particular the attitudes towards menstrual blood, which was far

⁶⁶ Qur'an, 23:12-14;

⁶⁷ RISPER-CHAIM, Vardit, 2003, pp. 87-88;

⁶⁸ These first two prohibitions find an evident relation with matters of hygiene and ritual purification, central aspects of Islamic religious everyday life;

from being correctly understood. The question on their minds was first and foremost: Why do women bleed regularly and live, being neither sick nor dying from such wound? This is a matter that, for centuries, if not millennia, has tormented the minds of men throughout the Indo-European world. Besides sex becoming interdict, there are other prohibitions suffered by menstruating women: they are forbidden of performing their prayers, they cannot take part in Ramadan's fast, they may not touch a copy of the Qur'an nor recite any of its verses, they may not perform the sacred pilgrimage to Mecca and are not allowed inside any Mosque. Basically, the woman is excluded from all Islamic religious rites. You can see how clear the matter of a woman's impurity is in the following verse:

*"And they ask you about menstruation. Say, 'It is harm, so keep away from wives during menstruation. And do not approach them until they are pure. And when they have purified themselves, then come to them from where Allah has ordained for you. Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves.'"*⁶⁹

But, in Islamic jurisprudence, there is another fundamental prohibition: anal sex. The Qur'an does not contain direct references to this matter, but the answer is found in Surah al-Baqarah:

*"Your wives are a place of sowing of seed for you, so come to your place of cultivation however you wish and put forth [righteousness] for yourselves."*⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Qur'an, 2:222;

⁷⁰ Qur'an, 2:223;

The interpretation given to this particular passage is that ‘place of cultivation’ reports to something capable of bearing fruits, of giving back. Since anal sex does not result in procreation, it is out of the question, making clear that only vaginal penetration should be allowed. This verse also bestows upon men the right to possess their wives whenever they so wish, for she is their ‘place of sowing of seed’. Although this is an interpretative reading of the Qur’an, there are several hadith attesting to the forbidden character of anal penetration:

“It was narrated from Abu Hurairah: that the Prophet said: “Allah will not look at a man who has intercourse with his wife in her buttocks.”⁷¹

“The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: He who has intercourse with his wife through her anus is accursed.”⁷²

The hadiths’ message on anal sex couldn’t be laid out more clearly: its practice is strictly forbidden. These sayings are articulated with the idea that reproduction should be sole aim of sexual intercourse. Likewise, following this same logic, the practice of oral sex is also repudiated, and although it is not considered prohibited (*haram*), since there are no sources explicitly forbidding it, it is still considered an undesired / offensive (*makruh*) practice. The main argument defends that the mouth is the organ responsible for the recitation of the Qur’anic verses, and

⁷¹ Ibn Majah 9:1923; Ibn Majah, *Nikah*:29; Tirmidhi, *Rada’*:12;

⁷² Abu Dawud 11:2157; Abu Dawud, *Nikah*:45; Ahmed b. Hanbal, 2:444;

would therefore be spoiled and made unclean if touching a part of the body responsible for genital secretions.

Now, if both anal penetration and oral sex are forbidden, we are left to consider masturbation (*'Istimna*) in the context of homosexual relations. In Ancient Greece, mutual masturbation between the pederast and his disciple was practice, since anal penetration was considered by some to be undesirable. Would it be possible, in Medieval Islam, to opt for this possibility, in order to avoid all the prohibitions previously mentioned in this essay? Regarding the Qur'an, the verse usually cited on this matter is the following:

*“And they who guard their private parts, except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed. But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors.”*⁷³

This passage makes plain the following: the sexual organ should only be used during relations with the married spouse. The individual's act of masturbation is not allowed, and neither is he allowed practicing it with someone, or to someone else. The hadiths, as usual, offer a more specific answer to this question, reinforcing its prohibitive nature.

“We were with the Prophet while we were young and had no wealth whatsoever. So Allaah's Messenger said, "O young people! Whoever among you can marry, should marry, because it helps him lower his gaze and guard his modesty (i.e.

⁷³ Qur'an, 23:5-7;

his private parts from committing illegal sexual intercourse etc.), and whoever is not able to marry, should fast, as fasting diminishes his sexual power.”⁷⁴

*“Rasulullah (Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam) said, 'The person who performs Nikah with his hands is cursed.'”*⁷⁵

If the second hadith is taken from Qadi Thanauallah Panipati's Qur'anic exegesis, and is therefore considered of inferior veracity, the saying cited by al-Bukhari follows the same lines laid on the Qur'an, ordering the private parts not to be fiddled with, and even suggests the practice of fasting as a means to reduce young people's necessity, whom the Prophet addresses, of masturbating. As such, this practice is considered to be *haram*, and abstinence should never be sacrificed, for it is the ideal pathway for unmarried Muslims. But, independently from this, we have Ibn al-Qayyim, Islamic jurist of the 14th century, who was quiet clear in defending that masturbation is not condemnable to the point of being considered unlawful:

*Ibn Aqil said: and many of our scholars have ruled that masturbation is makruh (disliked), and never explicitly said he that it was haram. If a man is torn between continued desire or releasing it, and if this man does not have a wife, and he fears that he will suffer because of this (someone like a prisoner, or a traveler, or a pauper), then it is permissible for him to masturbate, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal is explicit on this.*⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Bukhari, 5066;

⁷⁵ PANIPATI, Thanauallah, *Tafsir al-Mazhari*, vol. 12 p. 94;

⁷⁶ AL-QAYYIM, Ibn, 2004, p. 117;

My Thesis is concerned with the Iberian and Maghreb spaces, where the Hanbali school of *Fiqh* had little to no influence. But this first essay is focused on offering a wider geographical and temporal specter, overviewing Medieval Islam as a whole. So we are faced with differing views amongst Sunni Islam, and some of these can partly justify the practice of masturbation. It is also curious to point the fact that there appear to exist no gender specificities when it comes to this matter – its unlawful character affects both men and women.

We now come to extramarital relations. Here, the Qur'an shows itself as ambivalent, because, on one side, the sin of adultery is utterly condemned, but, on the other side, men are allowed to have sex with their slaves (female), known in *Shari'a* law as “those whom your right hand possesses” (*Ma malakat aymanukum*). Women, however, were not allowed to engage in sexual activity with their own slaves.⁷⁷ Although it is not our purpose to discuss matters of slavery in Medieval Islam, it should, nonetheless, prove quite interesting to comprehend its relation to the various expressions of sexuality in a Medieval context; particularly, when the Qur'an devotes more verses to the practice of intercourse between the Muslim and his slaves, than those regarding the need to pray five times a day. Let us analyze the following verses:

*“And [also prohibited to you are all] married women except those your right hands possess. [This is] the decree of Allah upon you.”*⁷⁸

*“So consume what you have taken of war booty [as being] lawful and good, and fear Allah . Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”*⁷⁹

⁷⁷ LEWIS, Bernard, 1990, p. 14;

⁷⁸ *Qur'an*, 4:24;

The first verse's meaning is clear: all married women are beyond the reach of any Muslim man, unless they are slaves. These, even if they are part of a matrimonial union, can be the sexual objects of a man without him incurring in haram. The second verse, although it does not directly address the matter of slaves' condition, relates with it since slaves are frequently a spoil of war. It falls to the Muslim's own judgment to decide what he should do his part of the spoils, and this verse justifies many of the actions committed with the slaves.

Obviously, war turned not only women into slavery, but also men. The slave is no longer a person, but an object, a valuable good, and having intercourse with 'it' does not constitute neither fornication nor adultery; as such, although not explicitly, this verse from the Qur'an opens the doors to the possibility that a man may have relations with his male slaves, which in a profoundly patriarchal society becomes highly intertwined with questions surrounding the manifestation of power; the master taking his male slave can be a matter of personal affirmation, as the *alpha male*.

Finally, and of utmost importance in the context of this essay, it falls into place the need to discuss the formal stance of the religious dogma in relation to the specific matter of homosexuality, source of controversy both in the past and present. Designated in Arabic as Liwat, this sexual orientation is the target of repudiation by the Qur'an, which recovers part of the Biblical narrative of Lot: the destruction befalling the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and their residents is a direct consequence of their sexual deviances⁸⁰. See the following verses:

⁷⁹ Qur'an, 8:69;

⁸⁰ DURAN, Khalid, 1993, p. 222;

And [We had sent] Lot when he said to his people, "Do you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with from among the worlds? Indeed, you approach men with desire, instead of women. Rather, you are a transgressing people." But the answer of his people was only that they said, "Evict them from your city! Indeed, they are men who keep themselves pure." So We saved him and his family, except for his wife; she was of those who remained [with the evildoers]. And We rained upon them a rain [of stones]. Then see how was the end of the criminals.⁸¹

Do you approach males among the worlds And leave what your Lord has created for you as mates? But you are a people transgressing." They said, "If you do not desist, O Lot, you will surely be of those evicted." He said, "Indeed, I am, toward your deed, of those who detest [it]. My Lord, save me and my family from [the consequence of] what they do." So We saved him and his family, all, Except an old woman among those who remained behind. Then We destroyed the others. And We rained upon them a rain [of stones], and evil was the rain of those who were warned.⁸²

And [mention] Lot, when he said to his people, "Do you commit immorality while you are seeing? Do you indeed approach men with desire instead of women? Rather, you are a people behaving ignorantly." But the answer of his people was not except that they said, "Expel the family of Lot from your city. Indeed, they are people who keep themselves pure." So We saved him and his family, except for his wife; We

⁸¹ *Qur'an*, 7:80-84;

⁸² *Qur'an*, 26:165-173;

*destined her to be of those who remained behind. And We rained upon them a rain [of stones], and evil was the rain of those who were warned.*⁸³

*And [mention] Lot, when he said to his people, "Indeed, you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with from among the worlds. Indeed, you approach men and obstruct the road and commit in your meetings [every] evil." And the answer of his people was not but they said, "Bring us the punishment of Allah, if you should be of the truthful." He said, "My Lord, support me against the corrupting people." And when Our messengers came to Abraham with the good tidings, they said, "Indeed, we will destroy the people of that Lot's city. Indeed, its people have been wrongdoers." [Abraham] said, "Indeed, within it is Lot." They said, "We are more knowing of who is within it. We will surely save him and his family, except his wife. She is to be of those who remain behind." And when Our messengers came to Lot, he was distressed for them and felt for them great discomfort. They said, "Fear not, nor grieve. Indeed, we will save you and your family, except your wife; she is to be of those who remain behind. Indeed, we will bring down on the people of this city punishment from the sky because they have been defiantly disobedient." And We have certainly left of it a sign as clear evidence for a people who use reason.*⁸⁴

*And the two who commit it among you, dishonor them both. But if they repent and correct themselves, leave them alone. Indeed, Allah is ever Accepting of repentance and Merciful.*⁸⁵

⁸³ *Qur'an*, 27:54-58;

⁸⁴ *Qur'an*, 29:28-35;

⁸⁵ *Qur'an*, 4:16;

The first four citations above account to Lot, and are clear on what caused the annihilation of the city's inhabitants. The abominable act of committing sex amongst same-gendered people, particularly between men. The last verse is taken from the fourth Surah, An-Nisa' (The Women), and allows for both men to be forgiven for their *haram*, if they never again perform it. In fact, there is no penalty or sentence prescribed in the Quran for the practice of homosexuality, but for this verse, stating only the need to punish both partners, but not the means in which that should be done.

Maybe this is why Ibn Hazm, in his famous treaty *The Ring of the Dove*, argues that no love should be prohibited if it is kept private, out of public knowledge.⁸⁶ But Ibn Hazm is known for contradicting himself in his work, and in the end he states that the conduct of the sodomites is abominable, citing various sources enforcing its punishment.

*“Malik is of the opinion that both parties of this offence are to be stoned, whether they are married or not. Some of his followers cite in support of this doctrine the words of God, touching the stoning of the Sodomites, “And stones are not far away from those who commit iniquity: accordingly the stones are near to those who commit iniquity after a like manner today. (...) Abu Ishaq as-Sari informs us that Abu Bakr burnt alive a man convicted of this offence; Abu ‘Ubaida Ma’mar Ibn Muthanna relates that the name of the man so burnt was Shuja’ Ibn Warqa’ al-Asadi; Abu Bakr burnt him alive because he allowed himself to be used in sodomy.”*⁸⁷

⁸⁶ HAZM, Ibn, 1996, p. 191;

⁸⁷ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 193;

Therefore, if we take into account the Quran's lack of specificity when it comes to punishing the offense, it falls to us to search among the existing *hadiths* to fill this vacancy. And if, in fact, there are multiple *hadiths* on the subject, their credibility is questionable, and many of them end up being discarded by Islamic jurists due their inability to prove their veracity through a credited chain of transmission. Putting this aside, these *hadiths* exist, and still to this day are employed to justify several legal sentences in Islamic countries.

*“Narrated Ibn 'Abbas: The Prophet cursed effeminate men; those men who are in the similitude (assume the manners of women) and those women who assume the manners of men, and he said, "Turn them out of your houses." The Prophet turned out such-and-such man, and 'Umar turned out such-and-such woman.”*⁸⁸

*“Narrated By Abdullah Ibn Abbas: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: If you find anyone doing as Lot's people did, kill the one who does it, and the one to whom it is done.”*⁸⁹

*“Narrated By Abdullah Ibn Abbas: If a man who is not married is seized committing sodomy, he will be stoned to death.”*⁹⁰

*“Malik related to me that he asked Ibn Shihab about someone who committed sodomy. Ibn Shihab said, "He is to be stoned, whether or not he is muhsan”*⁹¹.⁹²

⁸⁸ Sahih Bukhari 72:774;

⁸⁹ Abu Dawud 38:4447;

⁹⁰ Abu Dawud 38:4448;

⁹¹ *Muhsan* is the Arabic word for chaste;

These *hadiths* show that homosexuality was not unheard of on the Arabian Peninsula during the Prophet's own lifetime, even though the credibility of some of these may be put into question through a thorough research. There also appears to be wide array of punishments prescribed for this sexual deviancy, and some of them are even quiet far from what is conventionally expected; it is the case of an *hadith* attributed to 'Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, in which he defends as the most appropriate punishment for the homosexual crime letting a stone wall fall on top of the culprit, or, in alternative, burning him alive.⁹³

Seeing this vast religious apparel, notoriously prohibitive, both when it comes to the Quran and the *hadiths*, it would be possible to think that the reality of a Muslim's everyday would be in complete synchrony with this, an observation easily refutable after a brief comparison with a number of poems by some of Medieval Islam's most renowned authors.

One of the basic principles behind the appearance of new laws is that they are born of a necessity to answer pre-existing problems. The more laws we see on the same subject, and the more insistent they are, higher is the said society's concern for the issue they are dealing with.

⁹² Al-Muwatta 41:111;

⁹³ WAFER, Jim, 1997, pp. 89-90;

5. Archetypes and symbols for male homosexuality

In the Qur'an, sodomy is an indivisible sin. It has one name only, *liwat*, which is used throughout the whole text. But in Arabic literature, we are faced with a vast array of portrayals depicting a particular manifestation of homosexuality. It appears in many forms and shapes, each associated with certain particularities, while there are undeniable common aspects shared between them.

In this chapter, we will present an overview of the various archetypes that are presented in both *adab* literature and poetry from the al-Andalus and Northern Africa.

5.1. The boy, or “the gazelle”

The most reoccurring and significant of the archetypes of male sexuality depicted in literature and poetry is the beardless youth, commonly replaced by the metaphorical name of gazelle. If caught unaware, one would be shocked with the frequency of this archetype in various texts, only to soon realize that this was not only very common in al-Andalus, but that it was also more frequently depicted than love for the opposite sex:

“Whatever the legal strictures on sexual activity, the positive expression of male homoerotic sentiment in literature was accepted, and assiduously cultivated, from the late eighth century until modern times. First in Arabic, but later also in Persian, Turkish and Urdu, love poetry by men about boys more than competed with that about women, it overwhelmed it. Anecdotal literature reinforces this impression of general societal acceptance of the public celebration of male-male love (which

hostile Western caricatures of Islamic societies in medieval and early modern times simply exaggerate)."⁹⁴

First of all, it should be noted that this was not an innovation brought by Islam. In fact, the Mediterranean had seen this form of love praised frequently, within the Ancient Greek and, to a lesser extent, Roman civilizations. Pederasty has been the subject of much study and debate, and we now know that it took place in various ways; sexual intercourse did not always take place between the Erastes and the Eromenos. But one of the tasks assigned to the master was that of introducing the young boy into the arts of love, either physically, or through existing works on the matter – Plato's *Symposium* is one of the prime examples. There, not only is male homosexual love praised, it is considered in many ways superior to its heterosexual counterpart. Instead of producing offspring, it generates creativity, noble ideals and honorable actions, which are considered more valuable to society. This platonic conception of love, of appreciation for male beauty over that of the female, can be found in Ibn Hazm:

"For women are as aromatic herbs, which if not tended soon lose their fragrance; they are as edifices, which, if not constantly cared for, quickly fall into ruin. Therefore it has been said that manly beauty is the truer, the more solidly established, and of higher excellence, since it can endure, and that without shelter, onslaughts the merest fraction of which would transform the loveliness of a woman's

⁹⁴ MARTIN, Richard C., 2004, p. 316;

face beyond recognition. Such enemies as the burning heat of noonday, the scorching wind of the desert, every air of heaven, and all the changing moods of the seasons."⁹⁵

*"Love is a union of souls effected within the substance of their supernal world. (...) The soul must first be made aware of its points of resemblance and concord with its fellow-soul. (...) As for what transpires at first blush as a result of certain accidental circumstances – physical admiration and visual enchantment which does not go beyond mere external forms – and this is the very secret and meaning of carnal desire; when carnal desire moreover becomes so overflowing that it surpasses these bounds, and when such an overflow coincides with a spiritual union, in which the natural instincts share equally with the soul; the resulting phenomenon is called passionate love."*⁹⁶

In many aspects, Islam is seen as a continuation, rather than a rupture, of Classical civilization. Elements of personal hygiene, the segregation of the sexes, scientific knowledge, the centrality of urban life; Islam not only incorporated these and other elements, but it also expanded them. The existence of Pederasty in this context, though, is seen with much reluctance, particularly from Muslim historians. The answer may lie in looking to the source material that, in our case, may not provide an answer for the entire Islamic reality, but at least it may shed some light on the Maghreb and al-Andalus.

In a section of *Promenade of the Hearts*, al-Tifashi tells us of Sahl, a male physician, who had once the opportunity to question an unidentified homosexual in

⁹⁵ HAZM, Ibn, 1996, p. 144;

⁹⁶ HAZM, Ibn, 1996, p. 69;

regard to his condition and sexual practice. This is one of the richest passages in al-Tifashi's work, filled with vivid details, but the particular detail that should concern us is the mention of Pederasty, whilst talking about the recommended penis-size for a passive homosexual without any practice. It goes as follows:

*“For those who practice this science without the luck of having a master responsible for their initiation into adolescence, to all those whose appetite does not manifest itself before adulthood, when the body is already hardened, nothing is more convenient for a first experience than a small instrument.”*⁹⁷

The master, to which this short passage alludes, as a mentor in a young boy's coming of age, is an undeniable illustration of Greek pederasty in the Islamic world. The master is the figure that should, through his teachings, example or practice, show the boy all that he needs to know about life before becoming an adult himself.

Furthermore, while intercrural – or interfemoral – sex was the most common practice in Greece within the context of pederasty, according to Dover⁹⁸, as a means to preserve the honor of the boy, this passage alludes to anal penetration between the master and his pupil. We should note that al-Tifashi precedes this passage with an overview of various hardships faced by the passive partner in homosexual intercourse, when experiencing it for the first time. When he says *“the luck of having a master responsible for their initiation into adolescence”*, he points out that it is somehow easier for a young boy to engage in this kind of practice, and that an older man is his most suitable companion.

⁹⁷ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 300;

⁹⁸ DOVER, K. J., 1978, pp. 100-110;

The archetype of the boy often symbolizes the frailty of men, when they are overcome by the desires of their own flesh. We may be presented the story of a renowned person, with a position of influence and a high income, which loses everything for a boy.

“Our aforesaid companion had acquired a perfect mastery of the variant readings of the Qur’an. (...) He applied the greater part of his spending intellect to repeating the information he gathered from the lips of learned traditionalists, to transcribing which he devoted himself with assiduous zeal. But when he was smitten by this affliction – I refer to his association with a boy – he abandoned all that had been his constant care; he sold most of his books; he changed his habits completely. May Allah preserve us from a like abandonment!”⁹⁹

In other cases, the man would fall in love with a non-Muslim boy. This would put his faith to test, and in another story told by Ibn Hazm, we are told about a man who committed a grave sin in the eyes of Islam, recognizing the superiority of the Christian Divine Trinity over that of Allah, the one God.

“Abu-l-Husain Ahmad Ibn Yahya Ibn Ishaq al-Rawandi in his book entitled ‘Pronunciation and Correction’ mentions that Ibrahim Ibn Saiyar al-Nazzam, the head of the Mu’tazili sect, for all his eminence in scholastic theology and his supreme mastery of the higher knowledge, in order to enjoy forbidden relations with a certain

⁹⁹ HAZM, Ibn, 1996, p. 209;

Christian boy whom he loved to madness, went so far as to compose a treatise extolling the merits of the Trinity over Monotheism.”¹⁰⁰

The boy can be seen as an allegory of temptation, a metaphor for unfaithful conduct. These were considered good Muslims before their lusts took over their reason, and although Ibn Hazm does not blame the boy but the men themselves, it is the youth who becomes the catalyzer for their downfall. Ultimately, it serves as a trial for one’s faith, a test for their resolve, as we can see in another story recounted by Ibn Hazm:

*“Sometimes it happens that the trial becomes so great, and the lusts are so voracious, that abominations seems a mere trifle, and religions proves a poor and feeble thing. In order to achieve his desires a man will then consent to the filthiest and most outrageous acts. Such was the case catastrophe which overwhelmed (...) Ibn al-Jaziri. He was content to abandon his household, to suffer his harem to be violated, and to expose his family to dishonor, all for the sake of gratifying his amorous whim for a boy. Allah preserve us from such error!”*¹⁰¹

We should note that the boy as the source of temptation is not the exclusive use for this archetype. It may be used in a context that shows a faithful Muslim being the target of the youth’s temptations, becoming a victim instead. This still serves as a test for his faith, of course, but one in which he is oppressed by the lust of another, instead of being the one suffering from the carnal desire himself. One instance of such

¹⁰⁰ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 177;

¹⁰¹ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 64;

can be found in al-Tifashi's work, where he speaks of Abu Nuwas, one of the greatest classical Arabic poets.

*"Abu Nuwas was gifted with the fairest appearance. (...) The perfection of his shapes and his grace fulfilled the eyes of those who looked upon him. It is no surprise that he consumed their hearts, not only due to his gracious manners, but also his poetic genius. All the young men (...) were enticed by him, attracted by both excitement and the pleasure of his company."*¹⁰²

Young boys may be presented in many forms, and serve various purposes in Arabic literature. They are often associated with other archetypes studied here, such as the beardless or the cupbearer, but we chose to separate those from this instance because they are related to other aspects that differ from pederastic association, as you will see below. The metaphor of the gazelle, however, is one hardly detached from this archetype; it is frequently used, particularly in poetry, as an appreciation for beauty, male more often than female¹⁰³. The reasons behind it could be the concealment of an explicit homoerotic manifestation, though that would be unlikely. As we have seen, the literature produced in al-Andalus and the Maghreb was little shy with its adoration for the same sex.

The use of the word gazelle may then be linked to matters of form, rather than content; the rhyming structure, the rhythm of the poem. Those are only worth studying in the original Arabic texts, so we will keep to the matter of content in our case, as it is the subject of the archetype that interests us. It should also be noted that

¹⁰² AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 135;

¹⁰³ BEHRENS-ABOUSEIF, Doris, 1998, p. 53;

the recurrent use of the gazelle metaphor in Arabic poetry may be the source for the name of the ghazal, a popular form of poetry from the 12th century and forward. It is characterized by the use of rhyming couplets and a refrain, whereas the same meter is employed in every line. Not surprisingly, the major themes behind ghazal poetry were the joys and sorrows of love and separation, or the illicitness/unattainability of passion¹⁰⁴.

Ibn Sara as-Santarini (d. 1123) made plenty of use of this archetype – and, in fact, many others – in his poetry.

*“You are a gazelle whose cheeks
Are a garden of roses, guarded
From the scorpion of the aladar
By the hail of his teeth.
He drinks from the cup
As the moon drinks the stars.”*¹⁰⁵

In here, we have the appreciation of the boy’s beauty. There is a sense of purity and innocence, in the poet’s comparison between the cheeks and a garden of roses, but there is also a sense of sensuality, referenced by the drinking.

*“What human being can defend himself
From a seducing gazelle
With Iblis amongst his companions?”*

¹⁰⁴ BEHRENS-ABOUSEIF, Doris, 1997, p.15;

¹⁰⁵ AS-SANTARINI, Ibn Sara, 2001, p. 73;

*His face is an omen for union,
And his hair hidden from his departure,
Power is his to enslave me
And there is no mercy
That may help the heart to attain its grace;
His eyes have the roughness,
Of the Indian swords, while his waist
Is as flexible as the spears of Jatt.*”¹⁰⁶

Similarly to what we had seen previously, the subject of this poem presents a symbol for lust. The poet admits his inability to fight it, associating the boy’s allure with the presence of Iblis, the devil. The poet rescinds all dignity and grace, as he is made a slave of the young boy’s beauty, whose physical attributes are compared to weapons that cut through Ibn Sara’s soul.

In another example of the use of this archetype, al-Tifashi presents us with a somewhat more comedic/satirical take on the matters of coquetry and homosexuality:

*“Abu-Ahmad is so proud of his origin,
That he wriggles when he walks
Like a swimming fish.
Can you not see Rustam on top of him,
Preparing to shove something inside of him
In the likeness of a shad?
Oh Rustam, may my life serve as ransom to you!*

¹⁰⁶ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 131;

What a beautiful gazelle you make;

Useful for the sodomite

Who is active and the sodomite who is passive!’’¹⁰⁷

Finally, the universality of this archetype in the poetry of al-Andalus transcends Muslim authors, for it can be found in the works of Jewish poets as well. The contamination of such themes between both cultures has been studied before, and is understandable in the context of relative openness and acceptance that permeates the social behaviors of the Iberian Peninsula during the Almoravid period. In fact, ghazal poetry would become one of the preferred forms of work by Sephardic poets, writing in both Arabic and Hebrew, sharing also the archetype of the boy as a subject of their love.¹⁰⁸

In the next two poems – the first by Yishaq ben Mar-Saul (11th century) and the second by Isaac Ibn Abraham (12th century), both being Jewish poets living in al-Andalus – the presence of the boy archetype, and in fact of others that are analyzed in this chapter, is evident.

“Gazelle desired in Spain

wondrously formed,

Given rule and dominion

over every living thing.

Lovely of form like the moon

with beautiful stature

¹⁰⁷ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 331;

¹⁰⁸ ROTH, Norman, 1982, pp. 25;

Curls of purple
upon shining temple.
Like Joseph in his form
like Adoniah his hair
Lovely of eyes like David,
he has slain me like Uriah
He has enflamed my passions
and consumed my heart with fire.
Because of him I have been left
without understanding and wisdom.
Weep with me every ostrich
and every hawk and falcon!
The beloved of my soul has slain me --
is this a just sentence.
Because of him my soul is sick,
perplexed and yearning.
His speech upon my heart
is like dew upon a parched land.
Draw me from the pit of destruction
that I go down to Hell."¹⁰⁹

"The secret of love, how can it be contained
The heart and the tear are talebearers.
The heart is restrained from what it seeks,

¹⁰⁹ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 30;

*Shut up and be passion of him besieged,
Unable to obtain its desire.
If it presumes to attain to the stars,
Its pride is brought down, laid low.
Beloved like a hart, with heart of a panther,
If you desire to slay,
My heart is in your hand as clay.
But do not summon wanderings upon it.
For in its midst your name is sheltered.
Beloved, like a scarlet cord his lips,
Burining like fire for they are his censer,
And in them is the work of his signs.
Live by them, for it waits for them --
A heart long suffering because of them.
How my fate has hardened its spirit.
A while and separation will cause it to be odious
To my friends who knew its thoughts.
If wandering has separated us,
It has increased love.
I will watch for the gazelle
To leave in the garden my pleasures,
Although my rebuker stands to accuse me.”¹¹⁰*

¹¹⁰ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 41;

Daniel Eisenberg, in a short but insightful article about the Sephardic Jews in al-Andalus, points out that there is a link between this community and homosexuality as suggested by circumstantial evidence. It is, after all, a common theme in Spanish anti-Semitism.¹¹¹ Furthermore, he adds that several homoerotic and pederastic poems were found in the Cairo Genizah, from some of the most renowned Jewish poets of al-Andalus. Later authors referred them in their works, thus proving that these texts were not unknown in Spain, and that there was no need to hide their content. Eisenberg suggest that this male-male love also stood as a religious metaphor: Israel's love for God.

So, even if they did not share the exact same intentionality in the uses of their metaphors, both Muslims and Jews frequently incorporated the same archetypes into their poems, the young boy, or gazelle, being only a single one of them.

5.2. The beardless/hairless

The beardless is another frequent intellectual construction used in medieval Islamic literature. In many cases, it is attached to the archetype of the boy. After all, the boy is beardless as a result of his youth. But this is not the only case, as this is an archetype linked to manhood, experience, maturity, and, to some extent, integrity. To understand it, we have to understand the symbolic power of the beard in Islam.

In the Qur'an, Allah commands Abraham to shave his pubic hair and axillae, clip his nails, trim his moustache, but not to touch his beard.¹¹² Keeping a beard is in strict accordance with the Sunnah. A famous hadith further reinforces this point,

¹¹¹ EISENBERG, Daniel, 1990, p. 644;

¹¹² Bukhari 72:779;

stating: “*Cut the moustaches short and leave the beard (as it is).*”¹¹³ Perhaps more relevant in the context of this thesis, is a legal opinion by the Maliki jurist Yusuf Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (978-1071), who served as Cadi in both Lisbon and Santarém. In regards to the beard, he linked the act of shaving with homosexuality:

*“It is forbidden to shave the beard, and no one does this except men who are effeminate.”*¹¹⁴

We deal with the effeminate archetype further ahead in this chapter, so we will refrain from expanding upon the issue here. This example serves only to attest an undeniable link between sexual conduct and the beard, in a sense that the lack of it should be seen with suspicion.

In the Eastern Islamic medieval world, a Sufi meditation that survived in practice until recently, after centuries of condemnation by theologians, was the contemplation of beardless boys by the Sufi mystics, known as *Nazar ila’l-murd*. This practice was even considered haram by the Hanbal scholar Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328), complaining that “*They kiss a slave boy and claim to have seen Allah!*”¹¹⁵. Although there is no evidence of *Nazar ila’l-murd* ever being practiced in the Maghreb or al-Andalus, it is interesting to see the meaning of Taymiyyah’s words on the matter, and how it was perceived. It shows that the appreciation of a beardless boy was threatening to conventional religion, in the sense that realization was more perfectly attainable by human beings through love, rather than traditional religious practices. This gives substance to some of the claims presented above, in the case of

¹¹³ Bukhari 72:780;

¹¹⁴ LAMBORN, Peter, 2011, p. 59;

¹¹⁵ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 70;

the boy archetype, where the beauty of youth was considered a temptation in the eyes of the faithful Muslim.

But how has the idea of the beardless youth manifest itself in Western Islamic literature? Not far from the Eastern one, in the sense that, once more, beardless boys are a source for temptation.

*“I have seen men fall madly in love
With beardless boys. I will always be
One of the bearded ones who penetrate roughly
The objects of their love.
But for you, I believe, I am certain,
That you seek to deceive the whole world
That you are not a sodomite;
Nonetheless, you are a passive.”¹¹⁶*

*“Rumor has it,
That Abu-Hamid, the lettered,
Acted upon a donkey.
I know that he loves the adolescent
Whose beard is yet to appear.”¹¹⁷*

Above, both poems by al-Tifashi feature beardless boys. In the first, he insists on the idea that they are a source of desire for men, although he wants to make sure

¹¹⁶ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 332;

¹¹⁷ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 333;

the reader knows he has a beard, therefore being virile, and would never allow himself to be taken by another man. On the second example, he demonstrates how deranged homosexual desire is in his view, equated with bestiality in its form and grade of crime.

It should also denote that there are other connections between bodily hair and homosexuality in the eyes of Medieval Muslims, such as al-Tifashi. In *Promenade of the Hearts*, a chapter titled *On the activity of sodomites* compiles a series of signs related to the alternative sexuality. One of them is the absence of hair in men's legs, as illustrated by the following passage:

*“The individual in question [the homosexual] frequently has (...) thick legs, deprived of any hair, and he wears a short garment [to show them]. (...) The legs are the most significant sign of a deliberately scandalous conduct. Sodomites have successfully adopted the following aphorism: “The leg is the second face of a man”. If a young man should take too much care about his legs, the corruption of his morals becomes clear, as proof of a conduct dedicated to scandal. In contrast, not worrying about one's legs is a sign of freedom, intelligence, good conduct, respect for tradition, and a thousand other qualities.”*¹¹⁸

In here, the author conveys the idea that homosexuals care too much about their looks, which is not in accordance to the Islamic morals. It is a sign of arrogance and pomposity, which he puts in juxtaposition to the men who live free of such worries, possessing so many other virtues. Also, traditional Islamic male garments fall just over the feet. Thus, deliberately revealing more of the leg than what is traditional

¹¹⁸ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 133-134;

may be a sign for homosexual individuals to recognize themselves; it would not be a unique example of this behavior, since they occurred in Western culture until only two decades ago.¹¹⁹

Abdelwahab Bouhdiba argues in favor of this idea, in his seminal work:

“(...) The sight of beardless [amrad] boys can arouse. It is unlawful to look at a male face that is not covered by a beard, even if the look is not accompanied by concupiscence and even if one is protected from all fitna. The beardless boy is like a woman. He is even worse. It is even more criminal to look at him than to look at a strange woman.”¹²⁰

Another interesting piece of information related to beard and body hair found in al-Tifashi is a list he compiled of various verbal expressions used by homosexuals. Their quantity and diversity are revealing of a significant amount of care put into hair removal, a characteristic that shares some resemblance to personal hygiene practice in Ancient Greece.

“The “sleep” is simply removing the hair on one’s face; “grinding” means: to shave the face; “to strip”: to get rid of the hairs in the thighs and legs with the aid of a razor or a depilatory paste. The razor itself is known by the name of “firestone”.

¹¹⁹ A pierced right-ear or the limp-wrist; these became symbols for homosexual individuals to identify each other when discriminatory laws were still in place in various countries of the Western world, mainly the U.S.A. and the U.K. It provided a safer means than risking direct contact, thus protecting their integrity.

¹²⁰ BOUHDIBA, Abdelwahab, 2004, pp. 118-119;

Finally, the mysterious “operation of the hole” is none other than a very particular method that allows the removal of the hairs in the interior of a man’s behind.”¹²¹

Finally, it should be mentioned that there were some who appreciated bearded boys, although we have far fewer examples to draw conclusions from. In al-Andalus, one of the most significant ones comes from Ibn Sara, in a poem where he alludes to the beauty of his lover’s beard.

*“Now, potently bearded, the mantle
Of his beauty has been subtilized,
And our hearts, because of love,
Became his captives.
It is not darkness that has dressed his cheeks,
It is the color of his pupils,
That extend over them.”¹²²*

5.3. The cupbearer/servant/slave

The condition of a slave according to Islamic scripture has been already considered in a previous chapter of this thesis, so we will refrain from repeating past considerations.

In terms of an archetype, the cupbearer, the servant and the slave are highly intertwined. It is hard to disassociate the three, since it is improbable for a cupbearer

¹²¹ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 323-324;

¹²² AS-SANTARINI, Ibn Sara, 2001, p. 229;

to be a free man, at least in circles outside that of the administration. It is even less probable for such a position to be held by a woman.

In literature and poetry, these cupbearers often represent a place of subservience to the desires of their master, who will use them for his own pleasure. Since a slave has an under-human status according to the Qur'an, sex with one may be exempted from the idea of fornication; however, it is far more unlikely for this to be the case if the slave is the one doing the penetration. In that case, the master is practicing sodomy, and may be held accountable for his actions.

*“A cupbearer with little teeth,
Stopping desires from being achieved,
Brings golden wine, with virtues of its own,
And the debate, in the middle of the night,
Is like the morning sun
Holding in its hand the red of Mars.”¹²³*

The poem shown above refrains from addressing desire in any form; it is deeply contemplative in its content, and the subject of the poem is a possible strife concerning the wine, and the debate faced by the poet, where he decides whether to drink it or not. The action of the cupbearer may be understood as a sort of interruption, as someone who came in unexpectedly. A homoerotic sense is not particularly obvious here, but the cupbearer's interruption creates a difficulty for the poet, bringing with him the alluring prospect of wine and “*the virtues of its own.*” Of course, the virtues of wine are no virtues at all in the eyes of Islamic orthodoxy.

¹²³ AS-SANTARINI, Ibn Sara, 2001, p. 281;

Furthermore, in the last two verses, the cupbearer is equated with the morning sun, a typical symbol and metaphor of beauty in medieval Arabic poetry.

*“Light passing through wine
reflects on the fingers of the cupbearer
dyeing them red
as juniper stains
the muzzle of the gazelle.”¹²⁴*

In this example, we are once more presented with the cupbearer-wine relationship. Although forbidden in Islamic jurisprudence, wine consumption in al-Andalus was deeply connected with the region's economy, and the relationship between Muslims and Christians; these needed wine for their own ritual practice of religion, and there was legislation put in place to guarantee this happened. But the Spanish historians Carmen Martínez Salvador and Jesús Bellón Aguilera have drawn other important conclusions, directly related to the presence of wine in al-Andalus' poetry.

According to them, wine is strongly connected to the concept of *carpe diem* in medieval al-Andalus, and this is also seen in Persian poets of the same centuries. It represents a devotion to the earthly pleasures, to music, gardens, laziness and the inevitable realization that life must end, and that the most should be made of it. Besides, Maliki sources of the time attest to a somewhat permissive consumption of wine, as long as the Muslim refrained from reaching a drunken status. Al-Hakam

¹²⁴ HISN, Abul Hasan Ali Ibn, 2001, 111;

threatened to eradicate all the vineyards in his dominions, to stop the consumption of wine, only to have multiples jurists telling him that was not a wise decision.

Abul Hasan's poem uses the wine not as a catalyst to inebriation, but rather as a sensuous portrayal of the cupbearer, whose features are equated with a gazelle – one of our archetypes. It paints the cupbearer's sensuality through the drink's own translucence. Again, the scene is set for the archetype to serve as a construction of eroticism, without having any explicit reference to homosexuality. The following example, however, differs.

*“How many times have I been visited,
In the nights as dark as his hair,
As he lied next to me,
Until the break of dawn, bright as his face!
We drank together,
With ‘udri love as our third companion
When wine assailed my reason,
The same as his eyes;
But he was as chaste as a man of honor,
In the plenitude of his strength:
For chastity is only a virtue,
When the man is full of vigor.”¹²⁵*

Here, Ibn Sara's poem depicts wine in a greater depth than that of a mere aesthetic compliment to the language of the poem. Wine becomes linked with an

¹²⁵ AS-SANTARINI, Ibn Sara, 2001, p. 79;

unprincipled conduct, that of sensuous pleasure and inebriation. It not only draws from the classical concept of *Carpe Diem*, but it also represents Platonic love for a boy, existing within the limited confines of chastity - the same chastity that he associates to honor and strength.

The setup of this poem is utterly hedonistic, further praising the poet's restraint in regards to the object of his love. Even though he admits to having his mental faculties assailed by the wine, the poet struggles to keep from enacting his love in any physical way. This is a very recurrent representation of love in medieval Arabic poetry, homoerotic or not, and is in fact seen in Europe, too, through the form of courtly love. Still, the Andalusian sources of the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries make clear that this Platonism expressed in a same-sex framework was much more comfortable in an Islamic context, when compared to the Christian reality, where such instances are much less frequent.

5.4. The pagan / ignorant of the Qur'an

In an Islamic context, a homosexual lives outside the rules prescribed by God. He is a radical, someone who deliberately rebels against the natural order of the universe, which is balanced on the backs of the male and female energies. He knows that his conduct is not accepted, and he is often accused of indulging in other forbidden pleasures beyond sex, such as alcohol.

In this category, we have two archetypes addressed in both literature and poetry: the pagan and the ignorant of the Qur'an.

The first of these is linked to the Arabian Peninsula, and the times that preceded the emergence of Islam. Although it may not appear relevant in the context

of the present thesis, standing outside both our chronology and space, the fact is that these Arabian pagans are referred to in works from al-Andalus and the Maghreb.

In al-Tifashi's source, we are presented with one of the best examples of the pagan archetype. He tells the story of a man from Medina, named Abu-Djahl, who became so possessed by his sexual desire that he jumped naked on a camel's back and galloped across the desert, with the intention of having the camel's hump stimulate his own posterior. If that wasn't bad enough in the author's eyes, Abu-Djahl is then reported to have said:

*"Don't stop! By Al-Lat, I can see no man in the horizon as capable as mounting me as this camel!"*¹²⁶

If the scene depicted by the author wasn't already built in a most shocking manner, with a naked rider pleasuring himself with an animal, his words make a specific reference to Al-Lat. This was a pre-Islamic goddess of the Arabian Peninsula, one of the most important goddesses of Mecca, believed to inhabit the Ka'bah¹²⁷, and is mentioned in Sura 53:19.

This pagan embodies all that is wrong with someone who chooses to live outside the Islamic faith. He is unable to suppress a desire that has clearly turned him mad, forcing him to commit a form of bestiality, while praising a pagan deity at the same time. Complementing this account of Abu-Djahl, al-Tifashi does not hesitate to add another detail to his character, regarding his deviant sexual practices:

¹²⁶ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 272;

¹²⁷ AL-KALB, Ibn, 1952, pp. 14-15;

“It is said that he [Abu-Djahl] has the custom of anointing his posterior with saffron, to ease the task of the one who will join him. (...) The expression ‘yellow ass’ relates to simply to a rich man amongst the Arabs, who loves pleasure.”¹²⁸

Then we have those who are ignorant of the Qur’an. They share some common traits with the pagans; after all, both live outside the law of Islam. But the ignorant is depicted in an even darker shade. While the pagan is accredited with some naivety, a sense of belonging strictly to the outside world, the ignorant is a Muslim who failed in his devotion to God. He knew that he should have acted differently, but had no shame about it.

Again, it is in al-Tifashi that we are presented with some of the finest examples. He tells the story of a nameless homosexual, who had spread his debauchery amongst other Muslims, until he ended up being summoned by Caliph ‘Umar II¹²⁹ to the city of Damascus. There, the Caliph asked him if he knew any of the Qur’anic verses by heart, to which he answered negatively. Thus he was confined to prison, and assigned a teacher that would be responsible to have him memorize the whole Qur’an; only then would the ignorant be free once more.

The author goes on to tell us that although the Caliph made many expenses to try and teach this man about the Qur’an, he ultimately refused to learn. He claims that the Caliph’s attempt was an honorable but ultimately pointless endeavor, for he would not change anytime soon. He was then sent back to prison, and only released many

¹²⁸ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 271;

¹²⁹ Son of Abd al-Aziz Ibn Marwan, famous wali of Egypt. ‘Umar II reigned for three years, between 717-720;

years later, with a warning: to keep only to good companies, or they would not hesitate to have him imprisoned once more.¹³⁰

This particular anecdote successfully illustrates one of the theories defended by al-Tifashi throughout his book: the agents of debauchery, the homosexuals, follow their path willingly, and are proud to wave their disdain of the sacred scriptures. Even when faced with the endless generosity of the Caliph, this individual was unable to demonstrate any respect towards the faith, refusing to change his ways.

This is an ignorance that stems from rebellion. It is desired, which is worse than mere naivety, thus placing him in a worse position than the pagan. He does not seek redemption, but only the means to further indulge upon his carnal pleasure.

5.5. The prostitute

Al-Tifashi is very critical of prostitution, both male and female. He is constantly passing judgment in relation to these professionals, diminishing their statue as both Muslim and person.

In a chapter named *The different agents of debauchery*, al-Tifashi categorizes male prostitution into two separate varieties: the “*usurer of desire*” and the “*sandalwood*”. This is the author’s definition for the first:

“(…) Usurer of desire consists of two observations: the violent desire of a client... and the abusive profit one may make out of him. Such agent is, in effect, a homophile. The problem is that he has no fortune that can offer enough subsistence to maintain a house, wife and beautiful children. Thus, he offers his services (...). Once

¹³⁰ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 272-273;

they create an enormous debt from their clients, they can do with them as they so desire."¹³¹

This view of male prostitution raises various questions in regards to the practice of homosexual relations in Islamic societies up to this day. It should be noted that in terms of an archetypal use in Arabic literature, the male prostitute is a figure of wickedness. Not only is he one who follows a religious and moral misconduct, in addition to his sin of sodomy, he preys on the frailties of others and explores them for his own profit.

Prostitution (*bigha*) in Islamic societies is a very wide and varied phenomenon, ranging between extremes. On the one hand, there have been historical instances where it was permitted and even legalized by the authorities – in medieval al-Andalus, which is more interesting in the context of this thesis, prostitutes were known as the *khara jiyyat*, or those who pay the *kharaj*; the property tax. It has also been permitted under the specific jurisdiction of *nikah mut'a*, marriage of pleasure. This is a contract established between a client and the prostitute, confining the sexual relation into the boundaries of marriage, which is the only legal way to have intercourse in Islam.

However, all of these legal peculiarities, for lack of a better term, have never existed for male prostitution. Without any form of permission or protection, in religious terms, it can only be deemed as something evil. We must not forget that Islam does not contain the idea of original sin; if humans stray from the conduct

¹³¹ Idem, *Ibidem*, pp. 43-44;

prescribed by the Qur'an, it is a choice that can only result from the freedom granted by God.¹³²

Furthermore, this “*usurer of desire*” uses the weakness of his client for his own advantage, with the intent of turning him into an asset. Although we have to tread very carefully around al-Tifashi’s caricatured criticism, this could easily fit into the idea of homosexual relations as a power struggle between individuals, a measure of one’s status of virility.

The other category for male prostitution is what al-Tifashi refers to as “*sandalwood*”, defined thus:

*“[The sandalwood] offers the same alluring qualities of the beardless, but he is not primary concerned with seducing others. He occupies himself with supplying young men with other professionals. (...) If one of his professionals fails the appointment with a client, the sandalwood has to step in and perform the job himself.”*¹³³

Through the author’s own words, we are left without much doubt as to what a “*sandalwood*” would be called nowadays: a pimp. He is responsible for arranging the meetings between the prostitute and the client, but not only that, his utmost priority is to guarantee the client’s satisfaction – that means the pimp will have to step in if need arises.

The information we have is insufficient to construct an accurate portrayal of the complex system of male prostitution that seems to have existed in the Medieval

¹³² BOUHDIBA, Abdelwahab, 2004, p. 59;

¹³³ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 44;

Islamic Mediterranean when the *Promenade of the Hearts* was written. At least the pimp seems to hold a particularly important position, and is expected to provide a service of quality, with guaranteed protection of the interests of his customer. An interesting case of study on its own, that could be used to establish a model of comparison with female prostitution to see what the main differences may be between the two practices – beyond the aforementioned legal peculiarities awarded to the second.

In regards to its extent, male homosexual prostitution was found not only in al-Andalus and the Maghreb, but in all the Islamic Mediterranean, including territories later dominated by the Turks. In one of his many crude passages, al-Tifashi tells us the importance of this service in the Abbassid center of power:

“Know (...) that a convenient behind in Baghdad is more profitable than any mill in Homs”¹³⁴. ”¹³⁵

If, in some instances, it is easy to criticize the validity and importance of al-Tifashi’s work as an essential source for the comprehension of homosexual relations in the Islamic Mediterranean, there are other excerpts where he offers a level of detail rarely made available for medievalists. After all, male homosexual prostitution is still a profitable career in today’s Turkey.¹³⁶ In a chapter dedicated to the beardless professionals, Al-Tifashi offers us valuable information about the prices practiced by male prostitutes.

¹³⁴ City in Syria;

¹³⁵ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 141;

¹³⁶ “*These people who curse us during the day give money to lie with us during the night*”, in DUNNE, Bruce, 1998, pp. 8-11;

One method of operation would be to fixate a price in order to go home with a client, and then, once they begun their intercourse, the prostitute would offer additional services in exchange for higher prices, promising increased pleasure each time.

“-Give me one more piece of coin, and I’ll follow you.

I did it. But when I was comfortably installed in his bed, he said:

-Give me another piece, and I will place myself on all-fours.

Again, I gave him the money. I approached him when he got in the position, but then he said:

-Give me one more piece, and I’ll make something even better for you.

-And what?

-I will lay back on my bed and raise my legs up.

I complied one more time. He raised his legs, and when my instrument was fixed deeply into his behind, I heard him say:

-I know something that is even better than all that I’ve done before!

-What is it?

-Give me another piece, and I will let you lie down on the bed as if you were going to sleep. I will sit down on your instrument as you use your hand to hold it up. With that position, no pain or exhaustion will bother you.

This time, I was happy to accept. But when I felt him conveniently perched over me, he found a way of saying:

-Only one more piece, and I will give you the pleasure of accelerating my movements!

-No! – I immediately cried. – No, son of a whore! Go away! And may God Almighty stop you from cheating on those who seek nothing but honest pleasure.”¹³⁷

Putting aside al-Tifashi’s constant increments of humor and satire into his anecdotes, they do provide valuable information. The above passage is one of many in which he describes this *modus operandi* of added increments of payment during intercourse, and it is in accordance with his characterization of the “*usurer of desire*” – here, the prostitute allures his client with increased promises of pleasure, taking money for it.

But how expensive, exactly, would such services be at the time that al-Tifashi wrote *Promenade of the Hearts*? Again, the answer lies in the book:

“(…) if the young man receives between the legs¹³⁸, the tariff will be of one dirham; if he welcomes you in the deepness of his intimate domicile, the price will amount to two dirhams.”¹³⁹

Establishing today’s value for the dirham in the 12th century is a difficult task. The Islamic world at this time was essentially bimetallist, and dirham’s value as a silver coin shifted geographically; to the West of Egypt, and thus, the Maghreb and al-Andalus, gold was a much rarer metal, valued between 8-14 times higher than silver¹⁴⁰. One or two pieces of silver was an affordable price for most Muslim men,

¹³⁷ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, pp. 142-143;

¹³⁸ Interphemoral sex, famously practiced in some forms of pederasty in Ancient Greece;

¹³⁹ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 143;

¹⁴⁰ SPUFFORD, Peter, 1993, p. 49;

especially when compared to the exuberant costs required to constitute legal matrimony with a woman.

This supports the theory that homosexual prostitution would serve as a means to placate the pressure imposed by the segregation of the sexes and the highly patriarchal functioning of the society. Without the possibility to interact with the other sex, and many times being unable to afford a wife's dowry and subsequent costs, same-sex relations, either in a mutual standing ground or as a client-professional relationship, fill the need for these many to release their sexual urges and tension. Nonetheless, this idea is a very interesting explanation for the prevalence of same-sex relations in the Islamic world, from the Medieval Era to nowadays, and will be explored further ahead.

Finally, al-Tifashi also offers us some interesting philological elements about male prostitution in the Western Islamic world.

According to him, one of the nicknames most commonly used to address these professionals was “*binding horn*”:

“The best master of philology agree that such designation comes from the fact that such individuals distribute an abundance of horns when offering their services (...). Poets from the East and the West have abundantly cited the expression (...).”¹⁴¹

As we have been able to see, this archetype was often used by poets and others, under nicknames and metaphors. We have previously seen the names of “*usurer of desire*” for male prostitutes, and “*sandalwood*” for the pimps; with “*binding horn*”, al-Tifashi gives us the last of the names used in the West for such

¹⁴¹ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p.64;

professionals. There were plenty of other names in existence that we know of – in what is today's Iraq, for instance, one of the names for a male prostitute was “*Prefect*”, at least during the 12th century – but we lack factual evidence to assert their use in either al-Andalus or the Maghreb.

These nicknames must undoubtedly be the result of a familiarity with these professionals, and as some of them retain a colorful undertone to them, they mirror the unorthodoxy that Islam showed towards male homosexuality between the 10th and 13th centuries.

5.6. The moon

The sun and the moon are two of the most common metaphors to be found in the poetry of al-Andalus. In the paper “*Sunset in the Gardens of al-Andalus*”, Ikram Abdu-Noor defends that this is because the poetry of this region fed on naturalistic themes much more than had ever occurred in Arabic poetry, certainly influenced by the Iberian Peninsula's natural landscape, but also by the patrons and princes' passion for poetry, and their palatial appreciations for natural symbols, such as the gardens that frequently adorned some of al-Andalus most beautiful palaces.

However, while the sun is a female word in Arabic (Shams), and thus became a symbol and metaphor for female beauty, moon (Qamar) is a masculine word, and is used, in contrast, as a tool for the poet who seeks to praise masculine beauty in less explicit ways. This does not mean that the use for the moon as a symbol of male sex was not fully known in Andalusian society; its use was recognized and found amongst many poets of the time.

Amongst the prominent poets of the Iberian Peninsula, Ibn Sara illustrates diverse uses of the moon as a symbol of male homosexuality, and he would serve as the best example of this in the framework of this thesis.

*“Can you see how the full moon sleeps with me,
And that I attained my wishes,
Without anyone’s help?
We wanted wine to accompany us,
Nectar that has been our mother,
And now the moon is my kin.”¹⁴²*

But for the knowledge of this metaphor of the masculine, the obvious homoerotic connotation of the poet’s words would be lost in translation. The moon is the main motif for the underlying erotic passion portrayed in these words, not surprisingly consumed with the aid of an element which we have already studied: wine. And although it is not the subject of this thesis to go into depth regarding poetry itself, it is interesting to note how Ibn Sara portrays this sexual relationship as the establishment of a fraternal bond with another, becoming kin, under the maternal embrace of alcohol.

*“He is a moon,
Who has turned my soul into his celestial home,
And the curve of my chest into his horizon.”¹⁴³*

¹⁴² AS-SANTARINI, Ibn Sara, 2001, p. 217;

¹⁴³ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 235;

In the above example, even without the knowledge of the moon as a metaphor, the subject is defined in the masculine in the original Arabic text. Although less sexually charged than the previous example, this is still an undeniable use of an archetype for male homosexuality that fits perfectly into al-Andalus' frequent use of naturalistic themes.

Even if we discard the many uses of the lunar symbol as a replacement for masculine subjects, poets found other ways besides that of a simple archetype.

*“He is a slender boy, upon whose shirt
Rose a moon
Shining in a sky of perfections.
Our hearts were sentenced
By the risen spear of his body
From whence shines the iron of his blue eyes.”¹⁴⁴*

This poem does not shy away from blatant sexual innuendos, comparing male genitalia to a weapon. But, in this case, the moon doesn't replace the boy. The source of the poet's desire is explicit, and the lunar imagery is used as an aesthetic support and a stylistic tool for Ibn Sara to demonstrate the burning passion of the person behind the poem.

More than a simple archetype, the moon stands as a symbol for male beauty and eroticism, alongside the place occupied by the sun as a symbol of the female. Since the subject of male homosexuality in medieval Arabic poetry is, in itself, a

¹⁴⁴ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 227;

subject of relatively scarce sources available for study, it is not safe to assume that the moon is always used in a homoerotic context. In fact, in Classical Arabic poetry, the moon could be also used as a simple of human, non-gendered beauty. However, when coupled with explicit masculine articles in its language, there is no doubt that the lunar imagery is a powerful tool in the hands of the poets of al-Andalus to express less orthodox desires.

5.7. The old man

The archetype of the old man is more complex and diverse than many of the previous tropes already covered in this study.

First, it should be noted that the old man is featured more frequently in prose rather than poetry, for understandable reasons. Arabic poetry in al-Andalus and the Maghreb, between the 10th and 13th centuries, was all about the appreciation for earthly pleasures; love, wine, youth, nature. Poets celebrated excess, and although there were many who opposed such unorthodox behavior in regards to the Qur'anic teachings, these were still a minority, and it was this pursuit of happiness through lyrical poetry that made the blood flow through the veins of the artists and the people who appreciated their works.

As such, age represented a contrasting view to this. Age is the decadence of the physical, an approximation to Orthodoxy, wisdom and proper conduct. These were not things that interested poets. These were things found only in literature, and so we come once more to al-Tifashi's defining work.

In many of his anecdotes that portray explicit homosexual behavior, al-Tifashi presents an old man as someone who either points out the moral misconduct taking place, or an older, experienced homosexual himself.

“There was an old man who practiced medicine (...). People came from far to see him. (...) One day, one of his countrymen came to solicit his services:

“Master”, he said, “I would love to have your opinion on a certain matter.”

“Speak”, answered the old man.

“I occasionally suffer a great increase in my behind, to the point that it becomes bigger than my mouth.”

The proud physician questioned the man further.

“And when, exactly, does this feeling appear?”

“After I have a good time, but fear has kept me from seeking help before, and now it has become so large I can hardly hold anything inside.”

“Alas, yours is not a fault of your body,” the old man said. “You have failed the Supreme Lord, by receiving from behind others in the likeness of you.”¹⁴⁵

“In a city of the Gharb, there once lived an old man, of noble birth, rich and worthy of many honors, who actively pursued the life of the passive. (...) One day, he gathered all his hundred servants and said:

“I was told that a female wrong-doer has been seen near the entrance to my property, collecting foolish young boys and using them for her own good. I want you to wait for her to appear tonight, and surprise her. Each of you should have your way with her behind, one after another, while you keep her head pressed against the floor. Do this, and I promise you many honors and rewards.”

¹⁴⁵ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, pp. 276-277;

The next night, this old master dressed himself as a woman, and went to the entrance of his property, where he was immediately raped by his own servants. They obeyed his instructions, never removing his face from the dirt. (...)

After the servants were done and left, the old man got up and went to have a cup of wine, feeling his passive rage satiated. I am told that he repeated that same scene every night from then on, until the end of his life.”¹⁴⁶

In these two distinct passages, we are presented with a contrasting portrayal of the old man in regards to homosexuality. In the first, we have the mentioned orthodoxy and rigid regard towards the morality encased in the Qur'an. This is someone employed by the writer to pass judgment on another who has transgressed into a sinful way of life. Since age is related to wisdom, it is not surprising to explore the power of having the older men pointing out the flaws in the younger ones – after all, older people know best. It is the heavyweight in the scales of morality, to have a supposedly respectful physician tell it straight to the young man what is problem really is.

However, in the opposite side of the spectrum, it is fascinating to see how an anecdote that has all the ingredients in the 21st century to be considered shocking, become even worse when you know that it is about an older person. The plan conceived by this character, who sets his own rape scene in order to fulfill supposed raging desires – by no less than a hundred different men – can only be used by the author to enforce his own view of how deeply destructive and perverse he sees homosexual conduct. Al-Tifashi rarely refrains from passing judgment on his various

¹⁴⁶ Idem, *Ibidem*, pp. 288-289;

anecdotes, unless those stories contain so many shocking ingredients that any further input is unnecessary.

Another role played by the old man in al-Tifashi's work is linked to pederasty. In the context of this thesis, this is a subject particularly interesting, providing a bridge between socio-cultural behaviors typical of Classical Greece and medieval Islam. In many things, the Qur'anic religion continues and expands themes, ideas, practices; it feeds from Classical Greece and Rome, as it feeds from Persian culture. When the rise of Christianity in the West, after the fall of the Roman Empire in 476, operates a rejection on some of the major aspects of Classical Civilization, while expanding on others, the same happens with Islam.

Pederasty has long been a subject of much debate. What is its place in Islam, particularly in the geography and timeline that concern this thesis?

Starting with al-Tifashi, here is a very explicit example of pederasty:

“And what instrument do you recommend to the neophyte of this art, who lacks any form of training, who has not practiced any exercise?

To those who come to this science without having the chance of finding an older master who is responsible for their initiation, or whose appetite only manifests itself in adulthood, when their body is already hardened, nothing is more convenient than a small instrument.”¹⁴⁷

This short passage follows a discussion on the different sizes of male genitalia, which is studied further ahead in this thesis. But it is enough to provide us with a very interesting detail into the role of pederastic relations in Islam.

¹⁴⁷ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 300;

The way presented by al-Tifashi has us believe that pederasty is part of a rite of passage into adulthood. It does not necessarily speak of an old man, but rather of an older man in relation to the younger partner, but it still fits into this archetypal idea of a wiser, more experienced figure in relation to the pursuit of homoerotic affections.

It also speaks of the opportunity to have a master. It can either mean that the tutor of the pederastic relationship either has to be paid, that they are less frequent and thus harder to find, or simply that it is something not expected to happen for every boy.

It raises a series of questions, too: at what age, exactly, is a boy expected to take part in this ritual? How long should the relationship between the master and the instructor work? Should it be considered homosexual in the contemporary sense of the word, or rather a relationship that does not have to do with emotional (and / or physical) predisposition towards partners of the same sex, but is encouraged by the context of a segregational society, and the difficult access available for young boys into the companionship of young girls?

In the framework of this thesis and the sources confronted, it is impossible to answer all of these, nonetheless, important questions. One has to follow the fragmentary clues and hints, the implicit rather than the explicit, in order to understand the complexity of pederasty in Medieval Islam. As such, this is a topic that we will return to further ahead.

In Ibn Hazm's treaty on courtly love, there are anecdotes about older men and younger boys, too:

"In the mosque which lies to the East of the Quraysh cemetery in Cordova, (...) Muqaddam Ibn al-Asfar was always to be seen hanging about during his days,

because of a romantic attachment which he had formed for 'Ajib, the pageboy Abu 'Umar. (...) He was arrested more than once by the guard at night, for he had done nothing but stare at the page-boy until the latter, angry and infuriated, went up to him and struck the older man with some hard blows."¹⁴⁸

Here, we have an instance of repulsion by the young boy. Ibn Hazm goes on to tell us that Muqaddam Ibn al-Asfar was a man of considerable influence in Cordova, having built a number of mosques and drinking fountains, but this seems to not have given him any immunity from the guards or intimidated the boy. The latter, seeing himself the target of the affections of an old man, acted upon the shame which he felt, and although poetry and literature of al-Andalus at the time were rather explicit, homosexual conduct was still something which the authorities, surmised in the guard here, counteracted.

Returning to poetry, as was stated in the opening paragraph of the archetype for the old man, this is a much less explored theme. The desire for the young boy is frequent, and in fact a popular source for the inspiration of various poets, but the observant of that passion is often omitted from the poem, so we do not know how much older he is than the boy.

5.8. The poet / secretary

Similarly to the archetype of the old man, the poet is a trope whose use is limited to prose, and, more often than not, the intentions behind its use are fairly perceivable. These are men often named by the authors, either renowned poets of their

¹⁴⁸ HAZM, Ibn, 1996, p. 50;

time or servants of the administration – hence this trope being referred also as the secretary.

Homosexual conduct could be used to inflict trouble on someone else. It could serve as an accusation, as a derogatory weapon to be attached to a name and hence bring shame upon it.

“It is related of al-Hasan Ibn Hani’ that he was deeply smitten by Muhammad Ibn Harun, better known as Ibn Zubaida. The latter had an inkling of the situation, and upbraided the poet for gazing at him so intently. It is reported that al-Hasan remarked, that he would never have ventured to concentrate his gaze on Muhammad so long, if it had not been for the fact that the latter was overcome by his potations.”¹⁴⁹

“Chief Secretary Ibn Quzman was so sorely smitten with love for Aslam Ibn ‘Abd-al-‘Aziz, the brother of Grand Chamberlain Hashim Ibn ‘Abd-Aziz, (...) that he was laid prostrate by his sufferings and affected with mortal sickness. Aslam attended his sickbed as a frequent visitor, having no knowledge that himself was the source of the malady.”¹⁵⁰

In the first of the above two passages, both from the same work, Ibn Hazm passes no judgment. He mentions the names of both actors, but the true intent of having him convey this information is hard to understand. However, in the second passage, not only are names mentioned, but Ibn Hazam uses such example as a case

¹⁴⁹ HAZM, Ibn, 1996, p. 100;

¹⁵⁰ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 280;

of how powerful love is and how it can cause such misery to those involved, when it takes place in extreme situations.

Unlike many of the passages of text previously studied, a chain of full names is much more prevalent when the author is referring to these poets / secretaries, or people with a considerable degree of renown.

*“Ibn Souraydj told me one day,
After receiving my spear
At the very bottom of his behind:
This instrument which is yours,
Has a body so slim we can say
A dead has risen from his tomb.”¹⁵¹*

Al-Tifashi, as always, goes further than Ibn Hazm. Not only does he name Ibn Souraydj, a known musician (or, possibly, of a descendant), but he also goes into explicit detail regarding the sexual act. Written in the first person, al-Tifashi is telling this anecdote from the point of view of someone else, since he himself is never described in any form of homosexual conduct – actually, he is telling the story as if Rumi, the famous Persian poet of the 9th century, told it. Would this be an attempt by al-Tifashi to diminish the Persian poet, or rather the musician? Maybe both? And would the motif of his satire be the very context of a homosexual relationship, or rather to ridicule Rumi’s manhood, by making fun of his genitals? Unfortunately, the answers for these questions are hard to find.

¹⁵¹ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 332;

“A man who lives in the Gharb once told me:

I have invited for a drink a man who works as a secretary and judge in a country of great renown. Know, my friends, that this man is essentially a passive in his intimate pursuits, always accompanied by younger men of graceful features.”¹⁵²

But the archetypal servant of the administration, or poet, or secretary, does not necessarily need to be about named people. As always, there are anonymous anecdotes told by al-Tifashi, that are still rich enough to provide more details in a study for homosexuality between the 10th and 13th centuries in the Maghreb and al-Andalus.

This criticism of the men holding important office may either serve the author’s intent of spicing his satire, of denouncing corruption and the moral faults of the leaders, or simply to be no more than a jest, a source of entertainment and laughter for those who read or heard these stories. Other than that, the link between homosexuality and holding that particular office is unperceivable.

5.9. The damaged one

Another of the archetypes suitable for our study is that of the homosexual who is somehow damaged, from physically to psychologically and even to socially, but who doesn’t stray from pursuing that same path even when considering the adverse circumstances.

This is a diverse archetype, in the sense that it appears in various forms and styles. Here is, for example, a very light-hearted and even satirical poem:

¹⁵² Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 287;

*“So many times have I taken him from behind,
That his ass is now as wide as an open hand.”¹⁵³*

Saying that it is the point of this very short poem to make any form consideration on homosexuality would be a bit of an overstretching. It illustrates a humorous remark, probably enhancing the virtues of the man doing the penetration. When we compare it to some of the vernacular language in certain works of Medieval Europe, Ibn Santarini is actually prudish.

With al-Tifashi, however, the damaged one is granted another light. In one of the longest stories in *Promenade of the Hearts*, he fully describes the first time a young man has intercourse with another, as shown below.

“The body of the instrument finally made its way into the teenager. I could see him gritting his teeth in pain. He contorted himself with suffering, like a wild horse that did not want to be mounted. When the instrument was halfway in, a few drops of blood rushed down his leg. But the teenager was not deterred. He welcomed the instrument into his behind, getting more inside in time. Then, the instrument fired into the young man’s womb.”¹⁵⁴

The author did not shy away from any detail, and this is only a very brief passage. Interestingly, he goes on to tell how the passive partner became more eager each time the two men eloped, despite all the discomforts he felt. Even here, while

¹⁵³ AS-SANTARINI, Ibn Sara, 2001, p. 289;

¹⁵⁴ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 309;

described as in suffering and even bleeding during the penetration, the passive welcome his partner, grinding his teeth to appease the pain.

When put together with other instances where a painful relation is reported between two men, the perception that homosexuality is linked with suffering and a dismissal of one's integrity in exchange for physical pleasure becomes ever more blatant. Even though Sunni Islam does frown upon the extreme behavior of some ascetic practices and their disregard for the wellbeing of their bodies, a conscious pursuit of physical pleasure is in utter discordance with Qur'anic morality. This is an abominable practice to orthodox Islam, and al-Tifashi demonstrates through this archetype that these individuals don't care.

Other than physical damage, there are also psychological and social traumas to be faced by homosexual practice in medieval Islam. This time we turn yet again to another of our sources on this subject, as Ibn Hazm tells us how the reputation of a man is destroyed by his reckless disregard.

"I was once acquainted with a man of Cordova, the son of one of the principal clerks in the civil service (...), and I had always known him as most circumspect, a keen student of science and letters; in reserve he excelled all his companions, in quiet dignity he was supreme. (...) The first news that came to me after I had taken up residence in Jativa, was that he had cast off all restraint on falling in love with a certain goldsmith's son called Ibrahim Ibn Ahmad.

Then I had it confirmed that my friend had uncovered his head, shown his face abroad, cast off his head-rope, bared his countenance, rolled up his sleeves – in a word, that he had given himself to the lusts of the flesh. He had become the talk of the town, all tongues wagged of his adventure (...). All that he had achieved was that the

*veil of his private feelings had been stripped off, his secret had been divulged, his name besmirched, his reputation blackened.”*¹⁵⁵

In the first part of this passage, Ibn Hazm shows how high up the social pyramid this young man had stretched his roots. He came from an influential family, and excelled intellectually. He had a wide circle of people who recognized his worth. However, this man gave up all of this, succumbing to physical desire, declaring his affections for another young man, himself the son of a family of goldsmiths and hence belonging to a respectable slice of society.

Not only did this man sacrifice his social position, his own psychological wellbeing seems to have been disrupted, as he bared his body of clothes, showing parts which are better kept from sight according to the religious morality.

Even if, looking at the various passages taken from either prose or poetry, we can support the idea that homosexuality was somewhat tolerated, if never accepted, the archetype of the damaged one goes to show that to publicly recognize this sexual orientation could be very disruptive to one's social status. He goes on to relate another instance of such chaos:

“Sometimes it happens that the trial becomes so great, and the lusts are so voracious, that abomination seems a mere trifle, and religions proves a poor and feeble thing; in order to achieve his desires a man will then: consent to the filthiest and most outrageous acts. Such was the catastrophe which overwhelmed ‘Ubaid Ali Ibn Yahya al-Azdi (...). He was content to abandon his household, to suffer his harem

¹⁵⁵ HAZM, Ibn, 1996, p. 73;

to be violated, and to expose his family to dishonor, all for the sake of gratifying his amorous whim for a boy.

Allah preserve us from such error!”¹⁵⁶

Much like the previous passage, this last one illustrates the downfall of a man because of his lust. And Ibn Hazm is clear: religion cannot pose a barrier to such feelings, because it will prove itself useless.

How, then, should a man who finds himself overcome by these feelings remain faithful to his creed, and respect the teachings of the Qur'an?

“The finest quality that a man can display in love is continence: to abstain from all sin and indecency.”¹⁵⁷

5.10. The animal

We've looked into the gazelle as an archetypal image of the desired young boy, but animals, in a broader sense, are diversely portrayed in Arabic literature and poetry, often with other purposes but still related to homoerotic connotations.

Al-Tifashi clearly defines his position in regards to this matter, framing passive homosexuality as a behavior only indulged in by the animals lacking reason:

“The author of the present work would end the talk on passive sodomy by saying that it interests only those animals not endowed with reason, nor worthy of being addressed as men.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 302;

¹⁵⁷ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 304;

In accordance to Islamic teachings, to be a man (i. e. human) presupposes a faithful and compliant adherence to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, a life free from sinful behavior. This is why humans have been awarded reason and free will, so that they had the tools to remain faithful to God, but also to be able to create that choice by themselves – unlike the Djinn, the angels, and animals.

As such, the underlying comparison is one of complete subjection from the homosexual to a physical path without thought, concerned only with the attainment of pleasure. But let us look into other passages, to see if this is sustainable:

“A man belonging to an excellent family had the reputation of being a passive. He had the habit of sharing his house with others, a small group of friends who shared his vices. One day, they saw a man mounted on a donkey passing by, and they noticed that the copious member of the animal was like “a bucket going down”. One of the men sharing the company said:

“May the instrument of that ass penetrate the behind of the man riding him!”

“You are most unfair to us!”, protested the master of the house. “You share our company as friends, and yet you wish happiness to other than us!”¹⁵⁹

According to al-Tifashi, those who pursue the sinful behavior come together. He uses that argument to create a scene where the ultimate derogatory punch is struck, when they reveal their desire to copulate with a donkey.

¹⁵⁸ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 289;

¹⁵⁹ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 288;

This is another of the anecdotes where humor is subservient to the author's intentions. No reason is given for the man who wishes for the other to elope with the animal to make such comment, but that does not matter in any case – the whole anecdote is built only to emphasize how bestial homosexuals can be, unashamed of their desire, to the point of displaying it as their standard. It is not an innovation upon previous passages by al-Tifashi, only another brick in this intellectual construction of a bridge between homosexuality and perversion built by the author.

*“I heard the rumor,
That Abu-Hamid the lettered
Had his way with a donkey.
I know that he loves the men,
Whose beard is yet to appear.
Is this not proof enough,
That the rumors about this subject are true?”¹⁶⁰*

Taking another route, al-Tifashi first names an individual, Abu-Hamid, without wasting any time to accuse him of bestiality. What support can he have for such accusation? Well, none would be needed, as we have seen in many of the other instances where individuals are named and accused of practicing sodomy, with only the words of the accusations' authors to support them. In any case, al-Tifashi says matter-of-factly, that this Abu-Hamid is already known to be a pederast, and this should be enough to conclude that pederasty and bestiality are mutually inclusive paths.

¹⁶⁰ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 333;

But there is yet another passage of al-Tifashi where his disdain is made clearer, and the sordid context much emphasized:

“The master took hold of a stick of myrtle and delicately introduced into his cat’s behind. The animal consciously opened his thighs, pushed his rear against the stick, and obtained an unmistakable pleasure from the whole action. All who witnessed such scene shared their unbelief at what they saw. But what can we do? To implore that God, granter of all benefits, keeps us from such practices.”¹⁶¹

Curiously, al-Tifashi never questioned the existence of physical pleasure in these peculiar episodes. The animal is prostrated before the acceptance of his master’s actions, reveling on what is being done to it. And, as described by his movements, willingly takes part.

The reaction of the surrounding people, as well as the author’s statement about God, support the faithless tone of homosexual conduct and, in opposition, the correct path that is to follow the Qur’an. And yet it could also be seen as a despairing plea, as if homosexual conduct was so tempting that the only force with enough strength to keep men from indulging in it would be their faith in God.

But bestiality does not always constitute itself as a thoughtful exercise to bring faith into the equation. More specifically, in the case of poetry, it can assume a delightful construct and interplay of themes and symbols, presenting another perspective on the subject.

Besides the point that Santarini and al-Tifashi have very different approaches to homosexuality, not only in the style in which they portray it, but also in the light –

¹⁶¹ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 291;

the first never hides his passions, and the second is set on denouncing the practice as completely abominable to Islam. As a result, al-Tifashi's anecdotes and tone are set to emphasize the sordid character of the theme, while Santarini revels in that same excess, championing and unashamedly defending it.

*"I have adopted a lion, who is now my puppy,
And has scared away my slaves.
My arm is the pillow of Rashiq's cheeks,
And I hug him and have him close to me at all times.
As such, through the night, I have no need for any Layla
Nor any Salma, as my lion Rashiq is enough."*¹⁶²

The above poem is not as explicit as others by the same author, but the overall themes and symbols have an unmistakable pretense.

The lion is an ancient symbol for strength, courage, brute force, domination, and other characteristics traditionally identified with the masculine gender. This has been so from before the insurgence of Islam in the 7th century, from Europe to the Indian subcontinent. Santarini subverts this symbol, depicting it as a subdued power itself, subject to a much stronger force in play: the affection of the other subject of the poem.

The poet spends his time entirely in Rashiq's company, as the lion is less of himself and more of a simple cat, tamed by lust and love. And why can such assumption be made? At the end of the poem, the company of women is spurned –

¹⁶² AS-SANTARINI, Ibn Sara, 2001, p. 255;

Layla and Salma are frequent place names in Arabic poetry, meant simply as a synecdoche for any woman. The lion ends up fulfilling everything desire the poet has.

Bestiality occupies then a category of its own within the subject of homosexuality in Medieval Islam, but is still a significant part of the discourse to be found in the sources we are concerned with for this thesis. Ultimately, it stands for sin, for compulsion, for physical indulgence, in opposition to everything that a faithful Muslim should practice.

5.11. The foreigner

If we are to make a thorough catalogue of archetypes, symbols and tropes related to the perception of male homosexuality in the Maghreb and al-Andalus, between the 10th and the 13th centuries, we find ourselves with our work cut in half in regards to the perception of different ethnicities to an Arab author.

In the final chapter of *Promenade of the Hearts*, al-Tifashi writes that he has collected various opinions from homosexual individuals in regards to such issues as what the best ethnicity is, when talking from a strictly sexual point of view, as well as detailed information regarding the advantages and disadvantages of different sizes of male genitalia, and the complexity behind the first time a man experiences anal penetration. But, in the context of our thesis, let us stick to the matter of the different ethnicities.

Although they all belong to other geographical areas outside the focus of this thesis, they are seen through the eyes of an inhabitant of the Islamic Maghreb, and his mentality towards the other.

“There are those, for example, who have a taste for the young Greeks who have reached the beginning of their maturity, defending that these men allow themselves to be mounted more vigorously, are more precise in their gestures, masters of their arts. (...) Halfway between infancy and adulthood, the adolescents of this exquisite species possess the freshness of the young ages and the strength of maturity.”¹⁶³

Starting with the Greeks, it is curious to note that it all seems to orbit around the idea of youth. Their allure is their freshness; their adolescence and respective attributes are their greatest virtues to the eyes of the Arabs. They are also deemed to be the most desirable passive partners one could have.

From all these considerations, one cannot ignore the weight that the idea of pederasty exerts over these archetypal perceptions of the Greeks. Could it be that pederasty was still practiced by the Greeks at the time of medieval Islam, continuing an old and complex tradition that had such an important place in the relationships of men during the Classical Age? Or are we seeing something that has occupied and inflamed the imagination of these Muslim men, of a time that no longer exists in a place other than their nostalgic minds? It would not be a unique phenomenon in History; all one has to do is to see the travel diaries of some Europeans, when writing about middle-eastern or even far-eastern cultures, in particular about the women.

“Those who prefer the Khuzi¹⁶⁴ argue that there are none better than them. If we are to believe them, we find among these people the strongest butt cheeks, and a

¹⁶³ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 292;

¹⁶⁴ Khuzestan is a province in Southwestern Iran;

most strong resistance to liqueurs. They are able to maintain a slow and majestic rhythm for a long time, and their sap is considered the most delicate excuse for attachment.”¹⁶⁵

Following the Greeks on his portrayal of different ethnicities, appear the Khuzi. Part of today’s Iran, Khuzestan could be used as a synecdoche for the whole of the Persian natives.

The reference to alcohol in regards to these people is of resounding interest. If we are to find in al-Andalus a rich amount of poetry that makes use of wine as a fuel for love, a driving force for the passions of the flesh and a counterpart to the purity of faith in following an orthodox path, al-Andalus only inherits a trend that started precisely with poets from the Middle-East, particularly Persia.

Again, this is a caricature, and so little is known about al-Tifashi that we could not even know if he ever left the Maghreb, for instance. One cannot use these passages to construct a rationalized thought on the advantages of an ethnicity over another, in terms of sexual affairs – or any other topics, for that matter.

The primary concern and intent behind al-Tifashi’s *Promenade of the Hearts* continues to appear to be, above all else, a source of entertainment for its readers or listeners. The scientific extrapolations must belong to us, to try and dissect this richly complex source of information, with all the difficulties inherent to it.

Finally, the other archetypal foreigner presented by al-Tifashi are those ethnically African, the Zanj in Arabic. There are two distinct passages on this subject:

¹⁶⁵ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 292;

“We know that amongst the members of this strange persuasion, there are some who save all their praises for none other than the Blacks, disdaining all the others. The arguments they present are countless, but they usually insist on three points: blacks’ lips are wetter than whites, their instruments are much more imposing, and their fluids take longer to come.”¹⁶⁶

“Those who love darker skins say that the Ethiopians are endowed by nature with instruments of incomparable volume, capable of reaching their climax later than others, (...) possessing a tool that brings together the most magnificent exuberance with complete lubrication. These last ones, in effect, have apparel that is very particular: not only is the head of their member of an exceptional size, but they pour their fluids into the most intimate parts of our person, and we feel at that moment overcome by a delicious substance, that miraculously spreads all over our body. Furthermore, if they penetrate our behind, it is like being taken by workhorses; they do not stop until an eternity has passed.”

Al-Tifashi is not the first Arabic-speaking author to try and provide insight about the African ethnicity. Al-Jahiz (776-869), a descendant of the Bantu from his grandfather’s side¹⁶⁷, wrote the *Risalat Mufakharat al-Sudan ‘ala al-Bidan*, generally translated as the *Treaty on Blacks*. Many of the attributes to which al-Tifashi refers can be found there:

¹⁶⁶ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 286;

¹⁶⁷ OGOT, Bethwell A., 1974, p. 104.;

*“No other nation can surpass them in bodily strength and physical toughness. One of them will lift huge blocks and carry heavy loads that would be beyond the strength of most Bedouins or members of other races. They are courageous, energetic, and generous, which are the virtues of nobility, and also good-tempered and with little propensity to evil.”*¹⁶⁸

It is difficult to identify the first time that African people were first accounted as the most physically impressive of all human ethnicities, but al-Jahiz was certainly the first Arabic-speaking author to do so.

This exaggerated and overly sexualized portrayal of the inhabitants of the sub-Saharan Africa continued well into the Age of Discoveries, and was in fact an important piece of the theory that attempted to justify slavery.¹⁶⁹ Could this be accepted as the same reason for the promotion of a distorted image of African people amongst the Arabs? After all, the Zanj constituted an important part of the workforce in certain Muslim countries, some even taking part in noteworthy rebellions against their oppressors, as it happened in Basra, Iraq, in 869.¹⁷⁰ Al-Tifashi’s comparison of Ethiopians to workhorses certainly sustains such claim.

In light of what we’ve seen, the equally overly sexualized view of Africans in regard to homosexual practices is unsurprising. They sustain a mythos of exoticism and far-fetched allegations, probably not as centered on this ideology that sought to justify the maintenance of African slaves, but again, as a source of entertainment and storytelling for al-Tifashi.

¹⁶⁸ <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/860jahiz.asp> [seen August 2014]

¹⁶⁹ DERACHEWILTZ, B., 1964, pp. 279-281;

¹⁷⁰ TALHAMI, Ghada Hashem, 1977, pp. 443-461;

6. Beyond the archetypes

After addressing the theme of homosexuality in the Qur'an and hadiths, and its symbolic use in poetry through the generally acknowledged perception of archetypal representations, it is now necessary to consider what other information we can obtain from our sources about male homosexuality in medieval Islam, during the time and in the space defined for this thesis.

Although it has been increasingly noticeable that this subject is far more present in medieval sources than would be expected at first, male homosexuality is still a difficult theme to accurately study, since we would need far more material on the subject. However, those who devote themselves to medieval studies are also aware of this problem for most subjects, and to have any source at all on any subject is by itself sufficient luck. Therefore, we will have to essentially rely on al-Tifashi's *Promenade of the Hearts*, which delves deeply into the issue of male homosexuality in the Muslim world.

6.1. The body and personal hygiene

Personal hygiene is properly prescribed in Islam, as it is deemed a necessary part of the religious life of any faithful Muslim. The Qur'an itself mentions this need:

*“For Allah loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.”*¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Qur'an, 2:222;

It is also forbidden to handle a Qur'an unless the Muslim is clean and purified¹⁷², and there is one hadith that defines cleanliness as a major part of a faithful conduct¹⁷³. There are several other passages in Islamic jurisprudence that regulate on the correct state of body cleanliness for the performance of religious duties, but also for the consummation of the sexual act.

Another important part of the correct conduct of a purified Muslim is to remove his shoes when entering a Mosque.

*“Indeed I am your Lord, so remove your sandals.”*¹⁷⁴

It may seem peculiar to find this last aspect of ritual ablution in the context of homosexuality. As candid as always, al-Tifashi does not refrain from depicting an explicit scene in order to make his point come across:

“One day, a man was penetrating an adolescent boy. After reaching the height of their pleasure, the man said:

“Remove your shoes.”

*“I’m afraid,” the young man said, “that my ritual ablutions will no longer be of any value.”*¹⁷⁵

The removal of one's shoes, in this case, serves as the catalyst for the center of the argument. According to the young man's statement, such act would not be of any

¹⁷² Qur'an 56:79;

¹⁷³ Sahih Muslim 2:432;

¹⁷⁴ Qur'an 20:12;

¹⁷⁵ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 141;

use because the sexual intercourse that has taken place has completely besmirched any care for their purity. Their cleanliness has been lost. We have previously noted the place of anal sex in regards to proper Islamic conduct, so it could be possible that al-Tifashi's intent was to indicate its unclean character, or the impurity of homosexuality altogether. This is the only passage that addresses this issue, so we are limited to mostly speculation.

In an entirely different section of al-Tifashi's work, he compiles a series of questions posed to homosexual individuals about their condition, and several of them are associated with either their physical health or their physical characteristics.

One of these questions is related to the size of male genitalia and its advantages and disadvantages according to homosexual individuals. Interestingly, al-Tifashi brings the matter of hemorrhoids into the equation:

*“No person has ever praised the qualities of an object that is long but thin – except for the individuals afflicted by a disease of their behinds, such as hemorrhoids.”*¹⁷⁶

Further input is provided on this particular ailment, as the author points out that this type of male genitalia may be the best suited for the passive member who is encumbered by physical restraints, such as hemorrhoids, because it can still provide the necessary pleasure by reaching the innermost parts of its partner, without scrubbing the surrounding wounds. If the person is still somehow afflicted with an

¹⁷⁶ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 293;

itching sensation, rubbing a handful of squashed grapes is suggested to ease the irritation.¹⁷⁷

Continuing this thread of studying male genitalia, al-Tifashi claims to draw on the writings of other scholars of his time, to establish the limits penis' sizes. Providing the length in finger digits, he indicates that the dimensions of male genitalia range between six fingers, this being the shortest, and sixteen fingers. About the ideal size, al-Tifashi puts it in the colorful way which, by now, we have grown accustomed to:

*“It is convenient to say that the measure of a member between nine fingers and, even better, twelve fingers is the one that proves best at its office. It can be appreciated by all those who enjoy drinking water of the same cistern as these individuals.”*¹⁷⁸

Al-Tifashi's final considerations on this subject are his theory that the size of male genitalia is not connected in any form to the size, shape or weight of the individual as a whole, but to the practice of physical exercise.¹⁷⁹ He concludes by counseling those men who want to experience a homosexual relation as the passives, that it would benefit them most would be for their partner to have small genitalia¹⁸⁰, and then al-Tifashi also shares his knowledge on the best types of lubrication available for anal penetration.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 313;

¹⁷⁸ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 294;

¹⁷⁹ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 295;

¹⁸⁰ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 300;

¹⁸¹ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 301-302;

6.2. Signs that may identify a homosexual man

The shortest chapter in *Promenade of the Hearts* is solely dedicated to the means of identifying someone as a homosexual. Most of these signs may almost appear nonsensical to the sensibilities of the 21st century, but they may contain details that help better construe Medieval Islam's perception of male homosexuality.

The first enumerated factor relates to the house of a homosexual:

*“If we are to believe the word of experts, the first condition for the practicing sodomite is to dispose of an elegant home, for no one but himself, and with a key kept religiously hidden. Many cages with doves are often found within (...). It also disposes of a table for playing chess, examples of poems and stories of passionate love, compilations of illustrious tales, and works dedicated to enchantments and the workings of magic. The house should also be furnished with an easily renewable provision of fermented beverages. Finally, but above all else, this man will always be carrying a considerable sum of money – for one never knows when his next encounter might be.”*¹⁸²

This concern with privacy is particularly interesting. First, because if we think of the Maghreb at the time of al-Tifashi, it is described in other contemporary sources as a place where the houses were considered to be very open and exposed to the exterior, such as in Ibn Battutah's travels.¹⁸³ A heritage of Carthaginian and Roman influences meant a life of community rather than closed around the family. Therefore,

¹⁸² AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 130;

¹⁸³ BATTUTAH, Ibn, 2002, pp. 3-24;

this heightened privacy sought by homosexuals would understandably spark some form of interest for its peculiarity.

The significance of the doves is harder to ascertain without, perhaps, speculating so far outside our boundaries it would hardly be considered a scientific approach. We know that this is a bird with no particular relevance in Islam, unlike what happens with Christianity. We may conjecture that these doves are related to the concern with privacy, providing a means to contact other men without risking being discovered, but we have nothing from our sources that can clearly support this, and therefore we must remain ignorant about this symbol until further information arises.

On the role of chess, ghazal poetry, and treaties of magic, these could be grouped together in suggesting a corrupt morality for homosexuals. Chess is deemed by the majority of Islam to be forbidden, supported by some vague Qur'anic passages but also a very specific hadith:

*“He who played chess is like one who dyed his hand with the flesh and blood of swine.”*¹⁸⁴

More recently, some Islamic scholars seem to justify the prohibition of chess with verses from the Qur'an that reinforce the importance of a Muslim focusing his idle time on religious affairs, refraining from games and other forms of amusement that might distract him. The same argument is applied to a multitude of other games and forms of entertainment beyond chess, of course. It possible that, similarly, in the medieval period, it would be considered laxative of one's faith to indulge in such

¹⁸⁴ Sahih Muslim: 5612;

time-consuming forms of entertainment. Especially if these could somehow be linked to any form of gambling, a practice also prohibited.¹⁸⁵

The reference to treaties on magic could easily come to the same thing, another powerful symbol to equate homosexuality with unfaithfulness and even disrespect for Islam. The Qur'an is very explicit on this matter, deeming all interest in magic as evil, since it is a knowledge professed by Satan:

*"They followed what the Shayatin gave out in the lifetime of Sulaiman. Sulaiman did not disbelieve, but the Shayatin disbelieved, teaching men magic and such things that came down at Babylon to the two angels, Harut and Marut but neither of these two taught anyone till they had said, "We are only for trial, so disbelieve not." And from these people learn that by which they cause separation between man and his wife, but they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's leave. And they learn that which harms them and profits them not. And indeed they knew that the buyers of magic would have no share in the Hereafter. And how bad indeed was that for which they sold their own selves, if they but knew. And if they had believed and guarded themselves from evil and kept their duty to Allah, far better would have been the reward from their Lord, if they but knew!"*¹⁸⁶

Magic could also be another method used by homosexuals to persuade others into fulfilling their desires, through the use, for example, of amulets that sought to attract the object of one's affection¹⁸⁷. Al-Tifashi is very direct on the importance of carrying money for this effect, in fact establishing a link with male prostitution, but

¹⁸⁵ Qur'an, 2:219;

¹⁸⁶ Qur'an, 2:102-103;

¹⁸⁷ MADDISON, F., SAVAGE-SMITH, E., 1997, pp. 106-7;

the symbolic importance of magic as intrinsically evil is a far more effective object in portraying homosexuality as he saw fit.

We then come to the love literature. As we have seen in a previous chapter of this thesis, such was the amount of homoerotic content present in both poetry and prose, that al-Tifashi could not ignore it in the construction of his argument.

Finally, the centerpiece importance of the fermented beverages, or alcohol, could not be ignored. It is a frequent element of both khamriyyat and, of course, mujun poetry. It serves to showcase the intervenient characters as disinhibited, liberated by the constraints of their consciousness and, as result, their morality. We can go backward beyond the chronological limits of this thesis, in order to confirm the importance of wine in Arabic literature since the dawn of its age. In an excerpt of the One Thousand and One Arabian Nights, alcohol is the catalyst that transforms a calm setting into a Bacchus event:

*“(...) they drank, they danced, laughed and sang, reciting poems and lyrics. The porter began to play with them, kissing, biting, rubbing, feeling, touching and taking liberties. One of them would give him morsels to eat, another would cuff him and slap him, and the third would bring him scented flowers. With them he was enjoying the pleasantest of times, as though he was seated among the houris of Paradise. They went on in this way until the wine had taken its effect on their heads and their brains.”*¹⁸⁸

Once more, alcohol is also a symbol for straying outside the honorable path set forth by Muhammad to all other Muslims. The Qur'an strictly forbids its

¹⁸⁸ LYONS, Malcolm C., 2010, p. 46;

consumption.¹⁸⁹ To depict homosexuals has having an apt supply of it makes it evermore clear that al-Tifashi had the intention of setting a bad light on this community.

Besides these domiciliary appointments on the matter at hand, al-Tifashi goes into other details depicting this group of individuals, moving on to their actually physical characteristics. This allows us to study what would be perceived as the normal appearance of a Muslim man, and what made other individuals stand out.

For this, the author focuses, above all else, on the description of the legs. They provide a multitude of characteristics on which he discourses extensively, and to better sum this obsession is an aphorism provided by al-Tifashi himself:

*“The leg is a man’s second face.”*¹⁹⁰

According to al-Tifashi, homosexual men are often found with their ankles shaven and the remainder of their legs is thinner than usual. Cross-referencing with other of his comments on an individual’s appearance, this first consideration may try to establish a very clear link with effeminacy. Firstly, the lack of hairs is something to be expected from women and not from men. Secondly, women are the ones considered by al-Tifashi to be generally thinner, or indeed feebler, because men should be muscled and, therefore, strong.

It should be noted that hair removal is extensively regulated by Islamic jurisprudence.¹⁹¹ It is divided into three categories: that which is recommended to remove (pubic hair and axillae), that which should be maintained (beard), and that

¹⁸⁹ *Qur’an*, 2:219;

¹⁹⁰ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 131;

¹⁹¹ PORMANN, Peter E., SAVAGE-SMITH, Emilie, 2010, p. 101;

which while it is not prohibited to, nonetheless should not be removed (chest, arms, legs, eyebrows). As such, it should come as no surprise that as early as the 9th century, chemical depilatories had been introduced to al-Andalus, a feat attributed to none other than Ziryab.¹⁹²

Thus, while the removal of the hair from one's legs is not forbidden, al-Tifashi claims that no man of intelligence and proper conduct should be worried about the look of his legs.¹⁹³ However, there is even a greater cause for concern: when young men are lacking in body hair by nature, they are considered a beardless or even an effeminate.

Apart from the legs, the eyes are indicated as a possible sign for identifying a male homosexual. They may perform some form of sign to other men on the streets, or gaze at another for too long, possibly winking or smiling. Finally, the author indicates that these individuals may shift their ankles too exaggeratedly while walking, again equating them to women.

Concluding by equating homosexuals to feces¹⁹⁴, al-Tifashi then summary presents what he considers to be these individuals' sole qualities.

In first place, he highlights their ability to be mischievous and able to manipulate those around them in accordance to their own intentions. Secondly, they are proficient in the use of knives, being used to having to defend themselves. Thirdly, they are more unwavering when facing punishment in the form of a whipping, as their bodies have grown accustomed to the lashes of a whip.

From all the characteristics listed above, al-Tifashi could have attempted two things with *Promenade of the Hearts*: denigrate the perception of male homosexuals,

¹⁹² SERTIMA, Ivan van, 1992, p. 267;

¹⁹³ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 132;

¹⁹⁴ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 133;

through the demonstration of their deviant behavior in regards to the Qur'an, and the ill-advised approximation to female characteristics. Due to the lack of sources, it is hard to ascertain if he is further promoting a view already shared by the society of that time, or if he is trying to change it according to his own beliefs. Either way, his work is unlike any other that has made its way to us, and is an invaluable piece in the study of social representation.

6.3. Homosexuality explained through Galen's humor theory

Humor theory was the basis for most of the medicine developed in the medieval period, and the Islamic world was no exception. Although the origins of this model can be traced to Mesopotamia¹⁹⁵, it is its systematization by the Greek physician, Galen, in the 2nd century that was later picked on and further developed by Arabic and Persian scholars from Islamic territories.

By principle, Galen's theory is that the human body is governed by four distinct humors: black bile, yellow bile, phlegm and blood. Any of these would then be associated with two to four primary qualities (hot or cold, dry or moist), with one of the seasons of the year, and with a temperament (sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric or melancholic). Finally, the four ages of mankind, the months of the year and the rotation of the Zodiac were all contributing factors in this model. As such, the human body, the micro cosmos, mirrored the macro cosmos. See the following scheme, by Pormann and Savage-Smith¹⁹⁶:

¹⁹⁵ SUDHOFF, Karl, 1926, p. 87;

¹⁹⁶ PORMANN, P. E., SAVAGE-SMITH, Emilie, 2010, p. 43;

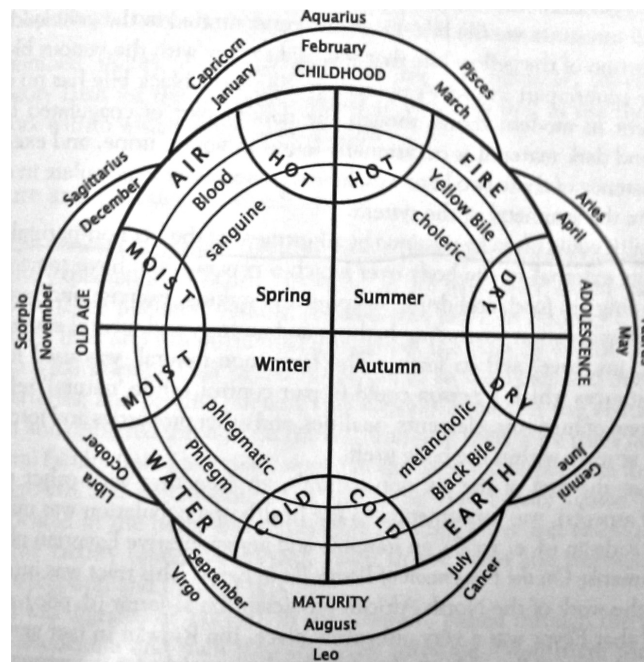


Figure 1 Illustration of Galen's theory. PORMANN, P. E., SAVAGE-SMITH, Emilie, 2010

When an imbalance of the humors occurs, be it by lack or excess, the result is the appearance of a disease. The physician would be expected to be able to distinguish which was the humor causing the problem, through the analysis of a patient's blood, so that the appropriate treatment could be performed afterward. This would generally consist in the adjustment of the "six non-natural factors"¹⁹⁷: air, food and drink, sleep, exercise and rest, retention or evacuation (including bath or sex) and mental states (rage, sadness, happiness, love, etc).

This precise theory, with all the details listed above, serves as al-Tifashi's basis for diagnosis and treatment of male homosexuality. According to *Promenade of the Hearts*, the problem arises when cold and moist begin to affect three vital organs: the brain, liver or heart. If this exposure is too prolonged, there is a distortion of the individual's masculinity in terms of his physical integrity, but also his soul.¹⁹⁸ If such

¹⁹⁷ Idem, *Ibidem*, pp. 44-45;

¹⁹⁸ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 266;

exposure would occur during adolescence, it could hinder a boy's natural development, and he would be bared of any signs of masculinity, even risking becoming become a eunuch¹⁹⁹ if his medulla were affected.

Apart from these physical imbalances related to the Galen's theory, al-Tifashi argues that there are other explanations for the occurrence of male homosexuality, all related to an imbalance of the soul. His views could nowadays be inserted into the discipline of psychology, however, in his time, they would be closer to metaphysics and religion. Medieval Islamic scholars often made a distinction between the soul (nafs) and human nature (fitrah), but they were not considered independent from each other.²⁰⁰ In fact, the study of mental illnesses was known as treatment of the soul (al-'ilaj al-nafs), spiritual health (al-tibb al-ruhani) or health of the heart (tibb al-qalb).²⁰¹

Following this line, al-Tifashi divides the soul into two dominions, the rational and the animal, and equates the first with masculinity and the second with femininity. If a young man allows his animal side to take over, he will become a homosexual, and behave in the likeness of women.²⁰²

Finally, al-Tifashi's last valuable piece of information into the perception of male homosexuality is his complete transmission of the theory defended by the famous Persian physician of the 9th century, al-Razi. Although he is outside both the chronology and the geography with which this thesis is concerned, al-Razi's fundamental medical writings were well known in the Maghreb and al-Andalus,

¹⁹⁹ Al-Tifashi identifies eunuchs as a separate third gender, neither male nor female, but he claims they are much closer to women than men;

²⁰⁰ DEURASEH, Nurdeen, 2005, p. 76;

²⁰¹ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 77-79;

²⁰² AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 267;

where they garnered both criticism and praise.²⁰³ It could be possible that al-Tifashi's claim that he is citing al-Razi's works is a false one, since he never mentions his sources or names any of the said works. He could be attributing his own opinion to al-Razi in order to give it credence, a common practice in the medieval period, even in Europe, particularly with works being attributed to Aristoteles. Nonetheless, let us focus on the content.

According to al-Razi, the moment the fetus is formed is detrimental to him later becoming an homosexual, as it is affected by the mixture of the liquids that take part in the conception of life, that of a man and that of a woman. If the first prevails, the fetus becomes a boy, while the second results in a girl. Later in the development of the fetus, if the masculine fluids are able to maintain their dominance over those of the woman, then all the expected signs of virility will be prevalent.

This marked dichotomy between the two sexes in Islam is, by itself, a remarkably complex matter, not only because it is subject to a deeply politicized debate today, but also because it raises several other issues in regards to social normative and the Qur'an. If we take al-Razi's explanation, for example, the prevalent influence of Hippocratic medicine at its root is evident, since it too was based on a markedly distinct approach to the sexes – a method epitomized in Hippocratic medicine's link between the uterus and most female diseases, for example.²⁰⁴

Following the explanation, we arrive at the central thesis which al-Tifashi assigns to al-Razi: homosexuality occurs when the fluids of both parents have equal force, and end up neutralizing each other.²⁰⁵ In some case, this can also result in the presence of both male and female genitals, or hermaphroditism, and so the author

²⁰³ NASR, Seyyed Hossein, 1993, p. 166;

²⁰⁴ GADELRAH, Sherry Sayyed, 2011, pp. 40-81;

²⁰⁵ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, p. 337;

makes no distinction between the causes of these two very dissimilar phenomenons. Hermaphroditism was a profoundly complex quandary for Medieval Muslims, and its equation to homosexuality should indicate how too same-sex attraction was so misunderstood. On the matter of having external characteristics of both sexes in the same body, al-Sarakhsi, Persian jurispudent of the 11th century, wrote:

*“The two characteristics [having what is male and female] are not combined in one person, because they are dissimilar by way of being contradictory.”*²⁰⁶

Returning to the matter of al-Razi and homosexuality, he indicates that some individuals may be born with their testicles inside the body, provoking an acute itch in the regions of the penis and anus, a symptom of the accumulation of cold and moist humors. That itch is what ultimately leads the male homosexual to create the illusion that he needs to be penetrated, in order to soothe his pains.²⁰⁷ Entering into an ever-increasing cycle, the more an individual commits these acts, the more prevalent the itch will become. Thus we arrive to the final, and central point of al-Razi’s theory quoted by al-Tifashi: treating homosexuality.

The cure is slow and the progress gradual. It requires regular massages of the genitals by a young female slave, which should be attractive to enhance the results.²⁰⁸ Between the massages, the homosexual should keep his penis greased with oil of Egyptian willow tree, mixed with musk. This mixture should also be moderately inserted into the anus. Finally, the homosexual should bathe his genitals, once a week,

²⁰⁶ SANDERS, Paula, 1992, p. 77;

²⁰⁷ AL-TIFASHI, 2011, pp. 338-339;

²⁰⁸ Idem, *Ibidem*, p. 340;

in a mixture of hot water and pine resin. His diet should refrain from sweet foods and alcohol, and should be rich in vinegar

This treatment, if it is correct to address it as such, presents two main guidelines. First, there is a focus on the region of the genitals, perceived as the source of the humor imbalance and consequently the target of the physician's concern. Secondly, the administered treatment uses various elements known for their anti-inflammatory characteristics. Pine resin and musk, for example, were known in Medieval Islam to be useful in the treatment of various infections, often appearing in medical treatises.²⁰⁹ Musk had also an element of purification to it, as it was a common ingredient in the making of incenses that sought to purify the air. Vinegar too was a well-known tool in the arsenal of a physician's options, and in Medieval Islam it was perceived as one of the strongest purifying agents available, essential in the treatment of bubonic plague, for example.²¹⁰ Al-Razi's concern seems to rotate precisely around an axis of purification of body, and, consequently, the soul.

So far, no testimonies have survived from the medieval period that may confirm the application of al-Razi's prescribed treatment for homosexuality, or the extension of its effects upon its patients. Al-Tifashi himself reiterates that it was not always successful, but that he only sought to share it in the interest of his readers, so that they may do with the knowledge what they will. What al-Tifashi probably never realized, was how important this document would be, in a few centuries, to the better understanding of the medieval Islam.

²⁰⁹ LANGENHEIM, Jean, 2003, pp. 54-58;

²¹⁰ AS-SUYUTI, 1994, p. 36;

7. Conclusion

To study human representations is bound to have a considerable amount of difficulties attached. The historical context in which they occur is fundamental to their understanding, and this has been one of the major difficulties in our thesis. There is a lack of studies in regards to the literature and poetry of medieval al-Andalus and the Maghreb. There are yet to be made any forays into the oriental influence in the literary production of the western Islam. Mujun literature has its genesis in Baghdad²¹¹, and although we have considerably studied its varied expressions in the west, it remains to understand if the Iberian mujun poets and authors continued the style brought from the east, or if the literature of al-Andalus and the Maghreb is unique, a product of an innovation whose course we are still unable to track.

Even with this lack of a necessary comparison with the genesis of its style, our sources of mujun poetry provide a unique insight into the expression of same-sex male eroticism in al-Andalus and the Maghreb between the 10th and 13th century. Confirming, in many regards, Foucault's hypothesis of human sexual relations being conceived in a power-based matrix, it became increasingly noticeable that the object of desire, and the man overcome with that desire, often the poet, represent a dichotomy reminiscent of the classical pederastic relation between the Eros and the Eromenos. There's a notion of authority when the beloved is younger than the lover, which accounts to the vast majority of our sources.

Mujun literature goes beyond the canonized structure of a pederastic relationship, however, and it expresses male-eroticism in a wide and varied array of

²¹¹ MONROE, James T., 2004, p. 34;

ways. It conjugates ethnical stereotypes, the expectations of a highly patriarchal society, an ambiguously prohibitive and at the same time sexually permissive source of jurisprudence, a medical approach following Galen's humor theory lines and even aristotelic and platonic conceptions of love and attraction. Mujun literature may resemble, in many forms, a Classical heritage, a tribute to such names of Bacchus and lewd literature as is Petronius and his *Satyricon*. However, mujun is also entirely unique, because it creates an harmony between the artistic forms of Classical Greece and their means of expressions, with the passionate 'udhri poetry brought from the Arabian Peninsula, and, last but certainly not least, that which is the most permissive of the three Abrahamic religions: Islam.

The lack of sources and also of bibliography on these questions has been one of the biggest hindrances to the research, particularly heightened by the fact that how little bibliography there is, it is inexistent in Portuguese libraries with public access. We have used every resource available in order to attain the information, but there is still much left to read and which, without institutional support, has proven impossible.

On the other hand, although comparably fewer when faced against other sources, the fact is that there is still an astonishing amount of mujun literature from al-Andalus and the Maghreb that has made it to our time. Through our comparison between the normative conduct of Islam, its jurisprudence as upheld by the Qur'an and the hadiths attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, we have come face to face with one of the main thesis in regards to male homosexuality in Medieval Islam, already discussed in the introduction: the existence of paradoxical ambivalence.

Paradoxical ambivalence results from a combination and even confluence of a series of prohibitive and permissive societal factors brought together, as so clearly expressed in the regions of the Maghreb and al-Andalus. A highly segregational

society, dominated by a strict patriarchal matrix, at the same time guided by a jurisprudence filled with legislative moral deterrents but highly permissive in regards to sexual conduct, resulted in the efflorescence of male eroticism in literature and poetry. Confined to archetypal relations and perceptions of hierarchical power, mujun literature celebrates the breaking of the norm in order to indulge in pleasure. To say that this can somehow translate into a general acceptance for homosexuality would not be correct, however. The legislation is quite clear in its prohibitions, and so, mujun becomes the ultimate means in which to release the pressure brought by constraint. The occurrence of these relations with young boys gives credence to the idea, as the young boy, by nature, represents a lack of masculinity. It would hence not be violating the norm, as it could be considered different than two male adults having consensual sex. Like these younger men, the beardless effeminates and the male slaves are also paradigmatic to understand the existence of paradoxical ambivalence.

In the end, the argument for paradoxical ambivalence is the strongest, when it comes to male homosexuality in medieval Islam. But paradoxical ambivalence is also an intrinsically human reality for most of the societies in our world, where the individual struggles to conform his desires and needs to the norms expected from him.

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